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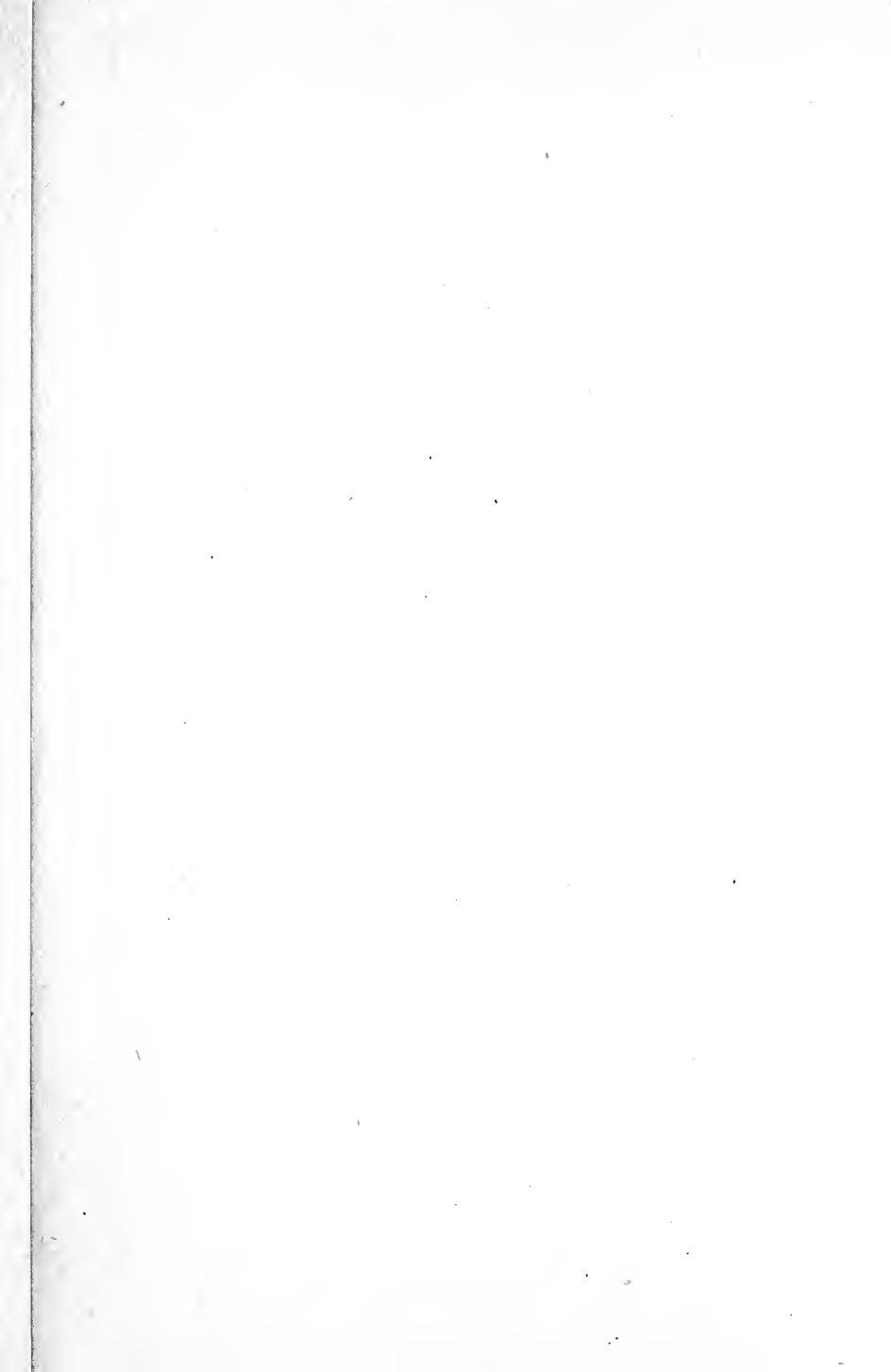
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IN MIZZOURA

Play in Four Acts

BY

AUGUSTUS THOMAS

Revised 1916 by AUGUSTUS THOMAS

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Act of March 4, 1909.

PREFACE

This preface is one of a number * trying to show each for its particular play, the manner of the play's conception, whether starting from a theme, a character, or a situation; the difficulty of the start and the larger problems of the story's development, together with the ways considered and chosen to answer them. It has been thought that such accounts might be of interest, and in some instances, perhaps, helpful to others beginning on the same kind of work.

In the spring of 1891 Mr. Nat Goodwin was one of the most popular and successful, as well as one of the most skillful, of American actors. He had played lively and slight farces almost exclusively; but having the ability for serious work as well, he was ambitious to try it. In a comedy by Brander Matthews and George H. Jessop, called "A Gold Mine" he had given one or two dramatic scenes most convincingly; and one sentimental soliloquy with a rose in exquisite tenderness. In person he is under the average height; and then, was slight, graceful, and with a face capable of conveying the subtlest shades of feeling. The forehead was ample; the eyes were large and blue, clear and steady. The nose was mildly Roman; the hair was the color of new hay. His voice was rich and modulated. These points are reported because they helped form the equipment of the star, who wanted a serious play in which he should be the hero. The order was without other conditions; the play might be of any period and of any land.

My own ignorance fixed certain limitations. At that time I had acquaintance with no other countries than the United States and Canada. These I knew

* *The Witching Hour*; *Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots*; *The Earl of Paw-tucket*, *The Harvest Moon*; *Oliver Goldsmith*.

fairly well. I had traveled them with one night theatrical companies; and also in newspaper assignments; and over restricted districts I had worked in the employment of a railroad company. I didn't care to write from books; so my Goodwin hero was to be perforce an American. It seemed best to make him an American of 1891. Other times and places were excluded and dismissed from mind.

Now, a blond hero five feet seven inches tall and weighing under one hundred and fifty-pounds—a Roman nose, and a steady, steel blue gaze!

I stood the Goodwin photograph on my table and looked at it until it talked to me. The slight physique couldn't explain the solid confidence of that look except there was behind it a gun. We were doing more man to man shooting in the country then than now; and my Western friendships made me more tolerant of the gun than some others were. Goodwin and a gun sent me searching mentally over the West from Colorado to the Coast, and through all occupations from bandit to fighting parson; and then my potential gallery, quite apart from any conscious effort of my own, divided itself into two kinds of gunpackers; the authorized and the others. I concluded that there would be less trouble, less "lost motion"—that was a phrase learned, and an idea applied in the old-fashioned composing room—less lost motion, in portraying a lawful gun toter than in justifying an outlaw; and the Goodwin part was therefore to be either a soldier or a sheriff. I have said that he was thin, graceful—and he was, but he wasn't particularly erect. He was especially free from any suggestion of "setting-up": sheriff was the way of least resistance.

My hero was a sheriff. You see how that clears the atmosphere. When you must, or may, write for a star, it is a big start to have the character agreeably and definitely chosen.

There must be love interest, of course.

A sheriff would presumably be a bit of the rough diamond; *contrast* wherein "lieth love's delight" prompted a girl apparently of a finer strain than himself; and *conflict* necessitated a rival. The girl should be delicate and educated, the *rival* should be attractive but unworthy; and to make him doubly opposed to Goodwin I decided to have him an outlaw—someone whom it would be the sheriff's duty and business—*business* used in the stage sense—to arrest.

Four or five years before the Goodwin contract I had been one of the Post-Dispatch reporters on the "Jim Cummings" express robbery. That celebrated and picturesque case was of a man who presented to an Express messenger at the side door of his express car, just as the train was pulling from the St. Louis station, a forged order to carry the bearer, dead-head, to a certain distant point on the run. The messenger helped the dead-head into his car and chummed with him, until about an hour later, when, as he was on his knees arranging some of his cargo, he found a pistol muzzle against his cheek, and his smiling visitor prepared to bind and gag him. Having done this, the stranger packed one hundred and twenty thousand dollars into a valise; and dropped off into the dark, when the train made its accustomed stop at a water-tank. The whole enterprise was so gentle, that the messenger was arrested and held as an accomplice, while the Pinkertons looked for the man with the money.

The robber was a kind-hearted person; and being really grieved over the detention of an innocent man, wrote several exculpating letters to the papers enclosing rifled express envelopes to prove his peripatetic identity. These letters were signed "Jim Cummings," a *nom de guerre* borrowed from an older and an abler offender of the Jesse James vintage.

After he was arrested and in his cell in the St.

Louis jail, "Jim Cummings" and I became friends as criminals and newspaper men sometimes do, and as criminals and I always have done, everywhere, most easily. The details of his arrangements, both before and after his draft on the company were minutely in my mind, and were so very vital that with the first need for a drama criminal I took him. Goodwin's rival should be Jim Cummings; a glorified and beautiful and *matinée* Cummings, but substantially he.

This adoption rescued the girl and the sheriff from the hazy geography of the mining camps, and fixed the trio in Missouri.

After Cummings had dropped from the express car, he had walked some fifteen miles to the Missouri River near St. Charles, and had then gone north on a train through Pike County. I had more than once made the same trip on freight trains; and I had a liking for the county as the home district of Champ Clark, a politico-newspaper comrade of several legislative sessions and conventions. Newspaper experience in those days before the "flimsy" and the "rewrite" emphasized the value of going to the place in order to report the occurrence; and I knew that, aside from these three characters and their official and sentimental relationships, the rest of my people and my play were waiting for me in Bowling Green.

In those days Mrs. Thomas and I used to hold hands on our evening promenades; but I think it was really our foolish New York clothes that made the blacksmith smile. At any rate, we stopped at his door and talked with him. He knew Champ Clark and Dave Ball—another Missouri statesman—and had the keenest interest in the coming convention for the legislative nomination. It was fine to hear him pronounce the state name *Mizzoura*, as it was originally spelt on many territorial charts, and as we were permitted to call it in the public schools

until we reached the grades where imported culture ruled. The blacksmith's helper, who was finishing a wagon shaft with a draw knife, was younger and less intelligent and preferred to talk to Mrs. Thomas. It is distracting to listen at the same time to three persons; but I learned that "You kin make anything that's made out o' wood with a draw knife;" and over the bench was the frame for an upholstered chair. A driver brought in a two-horse, side seated, depot wagon on three wheels and a fence rail. The fourth wheel and its broken tire were in the wagon; and the blacksmith said he'd weld the tire at five-thirty the next morning.

We went without breakfast to see him do it. He was my heroine's father by that time; a candidate for the legislature; and I was devising for him a second comedy daughter, to play opposite to the boy with a draw knife. That day I also found the drugstore window and the "lickerish" boxes that Cummings should break through in his attempted escape; and I recovered the niggers, the "dog fannell," the linen dusters, and the paper collars which, in my recent prosperity, I'd forgotten. I also nominated Goodwin for the legislature, which increased his importance and gave him something to sacrifice for the girl's father. But it was all so poverty stricken as I glimpsed it through the blacksmith shop and the little house I'd chosen for its consort. I yearned for some money, not much, but enough to afford "a hired girl," and for some means of bringing the money into the story. When we left Bowling Green I had given Goodwin a substantial reward for the robber's capture; but he wouldn't accept it. That was a mere dramatists device; and my quiet sheriff was already above it; besides, he wasn't sure that he'd hold the fellow. His wish to please the girl was already debating the matter with his duty.

On the way back to St. Louis, the conductor, who

took our tickets, recognized me. Charlie Church had been a freight brakeman when I was in the St. Louis yards. He was proud of his advancement to a passenger conductorship—proud of his train—proud of the new Wabash road-bed on the single track line. This road-bed was made of macadam-looking metal, clean and red as the painted bricks in the local Dutch women's gardens and hard as flint. When we gave the right-of-way and ran in on a siding, Church brought us up a few pieces to the back platform; and with one of them scratched my initials on the glass window. "What was it, iron ore?—no, that mud that the river leaves when it rises—'Gumbo' the people call it. Some fellow found by accident that it became red flint when fired and was making a fortune selling it to the railroad." To burn it, he used the slack coal from the Jonesburg mines nearby, which until then had also been waste. I put a handful of the stuff in my pocket; and after the Conductor left us, I turned the whole enterprise over to the Goodwin part. When the play ended, the audience should feel sure that he and Kate need never want for a dollar. I knew also where he had accidentally burnt his first sample, and made his discovery; in the blacksmith shop.

But what accident brought the raw Gumbo there? Perhaps the wheels of the stage coach; but that wasn't definitely Goodwin. The soft gumbo is not unlike putty; it would make a fair cushion for a broken limb: but I didn't want to halt my story with anybody crippled to that extent; and then I remembered the yellow dog drinking from the blacksmith's tub. I broke *his* leg and had Goodwin carry him miles in the stage, with his poor paw in a poultice of gumbo. It was a counter-pointing touch to a sheriff with two guns; it gave him an effective entrance; and it coupled in a continuous train, the sheriff, the bad man who sneered at it, the blacksmith and his motherly wife who sympathized and

helped in a better dressing, the forge where a piece of the discarded gumbo should fall amongst the coke, the helper who should pump the bellows for another and verifying bake: and last, and best of all, it gave me a "curtain" for a second act; when perturbed and adrift after being temporarily rejected by the girl, Goodwin should turn in an undefined but natural sympathy to the crippled dog in his box under the helper's bench.

That illustrates one of a dramatist's discovered rules: "if you use a *property* once use it again and again if you can." It is a *visual* thing that binds together your stuff of speech like a dowel in a mission table.

There are few better places than a railroad train for building stories; the rhythmic click of the wheels past the fish-plates makes your thoughts march as a drum urges a column of soldiers. A tentative layout of the story established in the first act, the educated Kate, discontented in her blacksmith father's surroundings; the flash fascination of our transient robber; the robber's distinct lead over Goodwin's accustomed and older blandishments. The second act saw Goodwin turned down and the robber preferred. The third act should see the robber's apprehension and arrest. I milled around the question of his identification as Illinois and Indiana went past the Pullman window; and then the one sure and unfailing witness for that purpose volunteered—the express messenger himself. There was no reason why this young man shouldn't be a native of Bowling Green and come home from St. Louis at the end of certain runs. He would know Goodwin and the blacksmith's family; but to put him nearer to them, more "into the story" sentimentally, I gave Goodwin a little sister and made the messenger her accepted lover, with his arrest and detention postponing the wedding. This need to free his sister's fiancé gave the sheriff hero a third reason for get-

ting the real robber; the other two being his official duty and the rivalry for Kate. The messenger and the sheriff's sister, the helper and the comedy daughter, and Goodwin and Kate, made three pairs of young lovers. This number might easily lead to a disastrous diffusion of interest unless the playwright were careful always to make the work of each couple, even when apparently about their own personal affairs, really to the forward trend of the story.

I doubt if the production of novels, even to the writer temperamentally disposed to that form of expression, is as absorbing as play making. The difference between the novel and the play is the difference between *was* and *is*. Something has happened for the writer of the novel and for his people. He describes it as it was; and them as they were. In the play something *is happening*. It's form is controversial—and the playwright, by force of this controversy, is in turn each one of his characters, and not merely a witness of their doings. When they begin to take hold of him, their possession is more and more insistent—all interests in real life become more and more secondary and remote until the questions in dispute are not only decided, but there is also a written record of the debates and the decision.

By the time our train pulled into New York, I was impatient to make a running transcript of speeches of my contending people. But that is a relief that must be deferred. Like over-anxious litigants, the characters are disposed to talk too much and must be controlled and kept in bounds by a proportioned scenario, assigning order, and respective and progressive values to them. That was the work of a day by that time and then, with the material gathered, and the intimacy with the people and the places, the play was one that wrote itself.

Augustus Thomas.

IN MISSOURI.

Produced at the Hooleys Theatre, Chicago, in August, 1893, with the following cast:

CAST OF CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE.

MRS. JO VERNON.....	<i>Jean Clara Walters</i>
ELIZABETH VERNON.....	<i>Minnie Dupree</i>
KATE VERNON.....	<i>Belle Archer</i>
DAVE.....	<i>Louis Payne</i>
JO VERNON.....	<i>Burr McIntosh</i>
COL. BOLLINGER.....	<i>William G. Beach</i>
ROBERT TRAVERS.....	<i>Francis Carlyle</i>
JIM RADBURN.....	<i>Nat C. Goodwin</i>
CAL.....	<i>Charles Miller</i>
ESROM.....	<i>J. W. McAndrews</i>
BILL SARBER.....	<i>Robert G. Wilson</i>
KELLY.....	<i>Louis Barrett</i>
EMILY RADBURN.....	<i>Mae E. Wood</i>
SAM FOWLER.....	<i>Arthur Hoops</i>

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

- ACT I. Living room at Joe Vernon's. Time—
evening in June.
- ACT II. Blacksmith shop of Joe Vernon.
Morning of the 2nd day.
- ACT III. Living room of Joe Vernon. Evening
of the 2nd day.
- ACT IV. Home and door-yard of Jim Radburn.
Time, the next morning.

IN MIZZOURA

ACT I.

Music at rise of curtain.—The old “Forty-nine” tune, “My Name it is Joe Bowers.”

SCENE:—*Pike Co. dining-room, living-room and kitchen combined. A line of broken plaster and unmatched wall papers marks the ceiling and back flat a little left of center. Doors R. and L. in 3. Door in R. flat. Old-fashioned table. Dresser, low window with many panes, window sash sliding horizontally—outside of door is pan of leaves burning to smoke off mosquitoes.*

DISCOVERED:—MRS. VERNON and LIZBETH.
MRS. VERNON *ironing*; LIZBETH *at pan of fire*.

MRS. VERNON. Lizbeth!

LIZBETH. Ma——?

MRS. VERNON. Move that pan a little further off. The smoke's a durnation sight worse'n the skeeters.

LIZBETH. (*Rising and coming in*) Well, we couldn't sleep fur 'em last night, and it's just as well to smoke 'em good.

MRS. VERNON. But such an all fired smell—what're you burnin'?

LIZBETH. Dog fannel——

MRS. VERNON. I thought so. It's nearly turned my stomich—come, hurry with this ironin' now.

LIZBETH. (*Coming down R. of table*) Let's leave it till mornin', ma——

MRS. VERNON. Can't Lizbeth, it's bin put off since Wednesday an' the furst thing we know we'll be havin' it to do Sunday—get me another iron.
(*LIZBETH goes left*) I'm reg'lar tuckered out.

LIZBETH. Me too. (*Sound of sledge hammer from door L. 3 E. LIZBETH exit L.*)

(MRS. VERNON *sits on rocker and fans herself with frayed out palm leaf.*)

MRS. VERNON. Lor'—to think o' this weather in June. It's jis' terrible.

(*Enter KATE R. 3. KATE is neatly gowned and is of a superior clay.*)

KATE. Mother—

MRS. VERNON. Well, Kate?

KATE. Must we have this awful odor again to-night?

MRS. VERNON. Got to have somethin', Kate, to drive off the skeeters. (*Enter LIZBETH L.*) I ain't slep' none for two nights.

KATE. They might be kept out some other way. (*She sits in chair R.*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Taking the fresh iron and resuming work*) I ruined my best pillar slips an' nearly smothered myself with coal oil last night. I'll try my own way now. It's all very well fur you, Kate, whose got the only muskeeter bar in the family—

LIZBETH. (*In the rocker*) Yes, and won't let your sister sleep with you—

KATE. I'll gladly *give* you the mosquito bar, Lizbeth, but two grown-up people can't sleep in a narrow single bed.

LIZBETH. I hope you don't s'pose I'd take it.

KATE. I gave you one to make the window frames.

MRS. VERNON. Well, kin the poor girl help that, Kate? Didn't the dogs jump through 'em? (*She indicates the ragged netting on the frame*)

KATE. Why do you have the dogs about?

MRS. VERNON. Well, when you've lived as long as I have in Pike County, you'll know you got to have dogs if you leave your winder's open. There—I've ironed another pearl button in two—yes, an' it's pulled a piece right out o' one o' yer pa's bosoms. That's cause I'm so tired, I can't see. Lizbeth, where's them prescriptions?

LIZBETH. In the yeast powder-box.

MRS. VERNON. Well, get one for me. (LIZBETH gets box from over the stove) I can't go on with this ironin' without some beer.

LIZBETH. Who'll go for it?

MRS. VERNON. Ask Dave—

LIZBETH. (At door L. Calls) Dave!

DAVE. (Off) Yes, Lizbeth.

LIZBETH. Ma wants you to—

MRS. VERNON. Now, don't yawp it out to the whole neighborhood, Lizbeth—tell Dave to come here.

LIZBETH. (In a lower tone) Come here!

MRS. VERNON. Give me the prescription. (LIZBETH arranges the linen in the basket. Enter DAVE L.) Dave, the ironin' an' the heat an' everything jes' about floored me—won't you go to the drug-store with this prescription an' get me a quart bottle of St. Louis beer?

DAVE. (Taking the prescription) Certainly.

MRS. VERNON. I can't send the girls after dark.

DAVE. Oh, that's all right. (Exit to street)

MRS. VERNON. (Ironing again) If your pa ever does get into the Legislature I hope he'll defeat this blamed local auction business. It's all well enough for those Salvation women who ain't got a thing to do but pound tambourines, but if they had the washin', and ironin' an' cookin' to do for a fambly of six—an' three dogs—they'd need something to keep body an' soul together.

KATE. (Going to street door) How much longer shall you iron to-night?

MRS. VERNON. Why? Do you want the room?

KATE. Oh, no—but——

LIZBETH. Is Travers coming to-night, Kate?
(*Sits in rocker*)

KATE. I don't know who may come.

MRS. VERNON. What difference does it make who does come?

KATE. None, except that the room is filled with smoke and—is hot.

MRS. VERNON. Well, to my mind Travers may as well get himself used to places that are hot and filled with smoke—fur if he ain't one of Old Nick's own ones, I never see any——

KATE. Mother!! Mr. Travers is a gentleman!

MRS. VERNON. How do you know? Four years to a female seminary don't make you a better judge of gentlemen than us who stay to home here. Your pa's a gentleman if he is a wheelwright—so is Jim Radburn——

LIZBETH. And Dave——

MRS. VERNON. Yes, and Dave——

KATE. But none of them is like Mr. Travers.

MRS. VERNON. No, thank God they ain't. Travers, Kate—(*Pause*) Travers—(*Pause*) and mind you I've seen men before you was born—Travers is as much like a gambler as any I ever saw.

KATE. (*Coming down*) Look here, mother—I've heard you say you had to run away from home with father because your people didn't like him—but that didn't make him any worse, did it?

MRS. VERNON. Well, it didn't make him any better, Kate, and I've regretted it from the bottom of my heart a hundred times—I want you to understand—(*Looks uneasily at door L.*) I've told it to him often enough—(*Lowering voice*) And if he was here I'd tell him again now—that I could ha' married a doctor.

LIZBETH. You're not calculatin' to run away with Travers, are you, Kate?

KATE. You know I'm not, Lizbeth—but I think you and mother might be a little more considerate in what you say. I try to make the place tidy and nice for your evenings with Dave, don't I?

LIZBETH. Well, I didn't mean nothin', Kate.

KATE. And I do my share of the housework.
(*Goes to window. As her voice trembles* MRS. VERNON *signals silence to* LIZBETH)

MRS. VERNON. Of course you do, dear. Lizbeth, you oughtn't to be so thoughtless in what you say.

(*Enter DAVE with beer.*)

DAVE. Here you are, Mrs. Vernon.

MRS. VERNON. Thank you, Dave—ask that old man in there if he'll have a glass.

DAVE. Yes'm. (*Exit to shop*)

MRS. VERNON. We'll clear the place right up, Kate—don't feel bad about it.

KATE. You needn't, mother—if Mr. Travers calls we can go walking. (*Goes to door*)

MRS. VERNON. No, Kate, and I say it only fur your sake—I wouldn't have the people of Bowling Green see you tramping the streets at night with a man you ain't knowed but a month, fur nothin'.

(*Enter JOE VERNON L. 3. JOE is a six footer with full beard. He wears a leather apron and has his sleeves rolled up.*)

JOE. Dave says, ma, that—

MRS. VERNON. Yes, here it is. (*Hands glass of beer*) Nearly dead, Joe?

JOE. (*Smiling*) Oh, no—but I kin stand this.

KATE. Is there any objection to our spending the evening at Mrs. Woods?

MRS. VERNON. Now, what's the attraction there?

KATE. She has a piano.

MRS. VERNON. Yes, with two teeth broke out of it. Why don't you ever play on the melodeon? (*Pointing to it*)

JOE. Yes, after Jim givin' it to you.

MRS. VERNON. (*Clearing up the ironing*) I wouldn't treat a dog the way you treat Jim Radburn, Kate.

(KATE silent at doorway.)

JOE. (*At the wash-basin on the bench at back wall*) Ma, where's the soap?

MRS. VERNON. I must a left it in the dish-pan.

(JOE gets it and begins washing in tin basin.)

JOE. (*Calling through sputter*) Dave!

DAVE. (*Off*) Yes, sir.

JOE. (*At door of shop*) Might as well shut up.

DAVE. All right.

BOLLINGER. (*Outside to the left*) Good-evening, Katie.

KATE. Good-evening, Colonel.

BOLLINGER. Rain seems to let up. Where's pa? (*Appears at window from L.*)

JOE. (*Looking up from the basin*) Hello, Tom.

BOLLINGER. Evening, Joe—Mrs. Vernon—Hello, Lizbeth.

LIZBETH. (*Again in the rocker*) Hello, Colonel.

BOLLINGER. Jis' through?

JOE. Been puttin' in a little overtime.

BOLLINGER. Reckon you'll have another job.

JOE. How's that?

BOLLINGER. Louisiana stage bust a tire on the near fore wheel to-night.

JOE. That's so? Look out—jus' a minute. (BOLLINGER steps aside; JOE throws water out of the

window) There, ma—don't say I lost it now. (*Throws soap back into dish-pan*) How'd she come to do that?

BOLLINGER. Too big a load, I guess—then the rain's cut up the road so and she were stuck in a rut an' all of 'em pryin' at her with fence rails.

JOE. Somethin' had to come.

BOLLINGER. Ye-ep.

MRS. VERNON. (*Sits at table R. and fans*) Won't you come in?

BOLLINGER. No, thank you. Too hot. Down to Louisiana on business—sweat clean through two paper collars. This'n's getting mealy. (*He wipes his neck*)

JOE. 'J-ever see such weather. (*Punches LIZBETH to get out of rocker; sits in her place. LIZBETH goes to the melodeon stool*)

BOLLINGER. Not since I was born. I hope the blamed rain's over. All passenger trains holdin' down to eight mile an hour 'tween St. Charles and Jonesburg on the Wabash on 'count of the wash-outs.

JOE. Why don't they ballast that air track?

BOLLINGER. Too stingy, I reckon. Say, Joe, if you git through the convention and they send you up to Jeff City, you'll have to jump on the corporations.

JOE. Well, how do things look for the convention?

BOLLINGER. Well, down Louisiana way looks about six and half a dozen. You wouldn't have any trouble at all, if we could get Radburn out o' the race.

JOE. Well, I ain't got no right to ask him to do that.

KATE. (*From the doorway*) Do you mean, Colonel, that Mr. Radburn's following will be a serious opposition to father's nomination?

BOLLINGER. Well, it looks that way, Kate.

KATE. Is there a chance of Mr. Radburn's getting the nomination?

BOLLINGER. Yes, I should say it was a stand-off atween him an' the Guv'nor, but I'm a-rootin' for your pa.

MRS. VERNON. Well, I can't see what right Jim Radburn has got to be as strong with the Democracy as Joe Vernon. (*Crosses to dishpan*)

JOE. You can't say nothin' against Jim, ma.

MRS. VERNON. I ain't. I'm just askin'.

BOLLINGER. Well, you see Jim's bein' sheriff four terms, an' never shootin' anybody——

MRS. VERNON. Why he's shot fifty!

BOLLINGER. Well, I meant never killin' nobody, has naturally endeared him to the peaceable element in the community. Jim has always said, and stuck to it, that a sheriff who couldn't wing a prisoner without killin' him, was a nuisance—and you take his record, and go clean through it, you'll find out this one thing. If a man was runnin', Jim fetched him in the leg. If he pulled a gun on him, Jim smashed that hand. And he says, "You ain't got a right to kill another man, unless that man draws two guns at the same time."

JOE. Yes, I reckon Jim's the gamest we ever had.

BOLLINGER. He came up on the stage to-night from Louisiana.

JOE. Was he "lectioneering" down there?

BOLLINGER. No, I ain't heerd of him makin' no canvass. He was helpin' me to collect testimony.

MRS. VERNON. Testimony? What fur?

BOLLINGER. Sam Fowler. You know that Express Co. is holdin' him prisoner yet?

JOE. Thought you was goin' to get a habus corpus?

BOLLINGER. Well, I was; only I went to St. Louis yesterday to see Sam. He's all right. They've got 'im in a comfortable room at the Southern

Hotel, an' they are tryin' to make him confess that he stood in with the express robber. He's livin' on the fat of the land, so I told him to stick it out as long as the company did, 'cause the longer they hold him, the more damages we'll get for false imprisonment. So Jim Radburn an' me been fillin' in the time, gettin' witnesses to his good character.

MRS. VERNON. What's Radburn got to do with it?

BOLLINGER. Well, you know—on account o' Emily.

MRS. VERNON. Oh, yes! I reckon that'll put off their weddin' won't it?

BOLLINGER. I'm tryin' to fix it that way, so's to pile up the damages.

KATE. (*Quickly*) Ma!

MRS. VERNON. What is it, Kate?

KATE. Why——

MRS. VERNON. Company?

KATE. Yes.

MRS. VERNON. Here, Lizbeth, take hold this basket.

(*They carry out basket R. 3 E.*)

KATE. Good-evening, Mr. Travers.

(*TRAVERS appears at door.*)

TRAVERS. Good-evening, Miss Vernon—good-evening, Colonel.

BOLLINGER. Evening.

TRAVERS. The rain seems to be over at last. (*He fans himself with his hat*)

BOLLINGER. I reckon we'll have some more of it with that ring around the moon.

TRAVERS. (*Coming into doorway*) Anything new about the express robber—good-evening, Mr. Vernon.

JOE. (*Up to stove; tries bottle*) How are you?

BOLLINGER. I ain't heard anything 'cept what's in the morning papers.

TRAVERS. What was that? I didn't see them.

BOLLINGER. Why, the blamed cuss has mailed one of the empty money wrappers to the Globe Democrat to show he's the real robber and sent a letter sayin' Sam Fowler was innocent.

TRAVERS. Yes? Well, did that do any good?

BOLLINGER. On the contrary, sir, the express company says he wouldn't be so anxious about Sam—if Sam weren't a friend of his'n.

(*Re-enter MRS. VERNON and LIZBETH. LIZBETH to rocker.*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Pleasantly*) Good-evening, Mr. Travers.

TRAVERS. Good-evening, Mrs. Vernon—Miss Elizabeth.

* LIZBETH. Good-evening.

MRS. VERNON. Hasn't Kate had the politeness to ask you in?

TRAVERS. Well, it's a little cooler out here.

KATE. Won't you come in?

MRS. VERNON. Do come—the skeeters'll kill you out there.

(*TRAVERS enters.*)

JOE. Don't sit there. I just splashed some water there, an' it'd spot them pants scandalous. (*Down to melodeon*)

MRS. VERNON. Lizbeth, give Mr. Travers the rocker.

(*LIZBETH to bench.*)

TRAVERS. Oh, no, I beg of you.

MRS. VERNON. Yes, it's the most comfortable. (*Places the rocker for him*) Vernon there had to put his feet through it yesterday fixin' the stove pipe, and they ain't been no furniture man along to mend it, though he ginerally comes Fridays.

TRAVERS. Thank you. (*Sits; KATE to chair at table; MRS. VERNON to cupboard busy*)

JIM. (*Off R.*) Hello, Bollinger, can't I shake you?

BOLLINGER. Well, looks like you was doin' the followin'—ha, ha!

JOE. Is that Jim?

BOLLINGER. Yes—comin' here—(*Calls*) you ain't got that cripple with you yit?

JIM. Yes—where do you think I'd leave him?

(*Enter JIM RADBURN from R. to door with small yellow dog in his arms. One front paw is tied up.*)

JOE. Hello, Jim, what's that you got there?

JIM. Er—a—his leg's broke.

JOE. (*Laughing*) Didn't pull a gun on you, did he?

JIM. The blamed fool dropped a fence rail on him. Good-eve'n'g, Kate.

KATE. Good-evening, Jim.

MRS. VERNON. 'Tain't one o' Beauty's pups, is it?

JIM. No, 'tain't no dog o' mine. Jes' follered me—run after the stage—then when she was stuck in the mud, Bill Sarber dropped a rail he was prying with, and—broke his poor little leg.

BOLLINGER. Sarber's the awkwardest cuss anyhow.

MRS. VERNON. Always was.

BOLLINGER. Then he luffed, and Jim made him 'pologize to everybody in the stage.

JIM. (*Looking about*) What you been doin' to the room?

JOE. (*Proudly*) Took out the partition.

JIM. I see. Makin' some improvements. Looks bully, don't it?

JOE. Makes the dinin'-room bigger, an' gives more space in the kitchen. Saves steps for ma.

MRS. VERNON. (*Approaching dog*) What kind of a poultice's that? Flaxseed?

JIM. Gumbo.

MRS. VERNON. Gumbo?

BOLLINGER. That's what they call that soft mud the river leaves down there when it rises—gumbo.

JIM. It's only a cushion so the joltin' wouldn't hurt him. I just been with him to Clark's drug store. (*To front*) Clark said he wasn't a dog doctor.

JOE. Wouldn't 'tend to him, eh?

JIM. No—but I'll square it with him. He's up for coroner. (*Starts for shop—stops*) I told him that a man what'd see a little dumb animal suffer ought to be drummed out of town. Is Dave there?

JOE. Yes.

JIM. Well, we'll splinter this leg ourselves. (*Going L.*)

TRAVERS. Why don't you kill him, and put him out of misery?

JIM. (*Pause in door L.*) Kill this little dog that took a fancy to me and followed the stage when I got in it!

TRAVERS. Yes—why not?

JIM. (*After appealing look to the others; then back to TRAVERS*) Why, I never killed a man.

(*Exit into shop; JOE, MRS. VERNON, LIZBETH, follow laughing—BOLLINGER exit R. H.*)

TRAVERS. (*Going to table*) What did he say?

KATE. That he never killed a man.

TRAVERS. Well, neither have I. Is that an unusual reputation in Pike County?

KATE. It is for one who like Mr. Radburn carries seven bullets in his own body, fired there by men he was arresting.

TRAVERS. I've heard he was very fond of you.

KATE. (*Turning away*) Don't talk of that.

TRAVERS. May I talk of my love for you?

KATE. (*Turning*) Yes.

TRAVERS. You are not happy here.

KATE. I feel it is unworthy in me to say that I am not.

TRAVERS. Yet, you are not——

KATE. The narrowness of the life oppresses me. I do not live in their world of work and humble wishes—they made the mistake of sending me away to school. I have seen a bigger world than theirs. (*Turns, elbows on table; impulsively*) I like you, Mr. Travers, because you are a part of that bigger world.

TRAVERS. You like me, Kate! Only like? No more?

KATE. I don't know.

TRAVERS. Will you go with me—away from here, into that bigger world?

KATE. Not until I am sure it is you for whom I go, and not merely for the liberty.

TRAVERS. How will you ever tell?

KATE. Some accident will teach me. It is a dreadful moment, isn't it, when we learn that kinship, the truest kinship, is not a thing of blood, but of ideas—my college mates who thought as I did, were nearer to me than my family, who never can think as I do.

(*Enter MRS. VERNON L.*)

MRS. VERNON. I never see such a hero as that little dog—he jis' seemed to know they was helpin'.

him when they pulled them poor bones together—jes' look how quiet he stands—whinnered a little but didn't holler 'tall. (TRAVERS *goes up to door*)

KATE. (*Aside*) That is enough to make the man despise me! (*Goes back to table*)

TRAVERS. (*Going up*) Oh yes—he knows he's among friends.

MRS. VERNON. (*Looking into shop*) Now I say they's lots of folks of education what ain't got as much sense as that dog.

(TRAVERS *comes down*.)

KATE. (R. C.) Let us go walking. I can't breathe in here.

TRAVERS. (C.) With pleasure.

MRS. VERNON. Where you goin', Kate?

KATE. Only outside the door—(*At door*) to the corner.

MRS. VERNON. (*Doubtingly*) Well—(*Going c. Exeunt TRAVERS and KATE—positively*) Well, I don't care who hears me—(R. C., *looks cautiously out*) I don't like his looks.

(*Enter JOE L.*)

JOE. (*Up L.*) Ma!

MRS. VERNON. What?

JOE. Ain't you got some soup meat or sompthin' you kin spare that little ki-yoodle?

MRS. VERNON. Well, if his leg's broke he better not have no meat or stuff that'd feed a fever. If yew kin drink your second cup in the mornin' without milk I kin spare him some o' that.

JOE. All right.

MRS. VERNON. (*Scolding*) An' the milk's hangin' in the cistern. (*Takes cup from back wall*) Plague take it! Woman's work's never done. (*Exit R. 3*)

JOE. (*After a moment*) I s'pose I could a got it. (*Calls*) Lizbeth!

LIZBETH. (*Off L.*) Yes. (*Enters*)

JOE. (*Scolding*) Why don't you help your poor ma? She's had to go after the milk.

LIZBETH. (*Angrily meeting JOE's tone*) Well, I didn't know it. (*Exit after MRS. VERNON*)

JOE. (*Getting alarm-clock. Calls into shop*) Dave!

DAVE. (*Off*) Yes.

JOE. (*At door L.*) You don't need him Jim?

JIM. (*Off*) No.

JOE. (*Leaving door*) See here— (*Enter DAVE*) Kin you run one o' these machines?

DAVE. I allow I kin.

JOE. (*Hands clock to DAVE*) Then set her an hour earlier and have things fired up in the mornin'. We've got to weld that Louisiana tire, I reckon, afore breakfast.

DAVE. All right.

(*Enter MRS. VERNON and LIZBETH R.*)

MRS. VERNON Here Joe— (*Hands cup*) Git to feedin' it, I'll git attached to it an' we've got too many dogs now.

JOE. (*Caressing her with rough push on the face*) I know you, ma—you're the motherin'est old hen in Pike— (*Going*) If he don't drink this I'll drowned him.

MRS. VERNON. (*To street door up R.*) Now, Lizbeth, I don't see nothin' of Kate. She's out there with Travers—you an' Dave kind o' hang round like you was with 'em.

LIZBETH. Come, Dave. (*To MRS. VERNON*) Jes' not let on?

MRS. VERNON. Yes—purtendin'.

(*Exit LIZBETH.*)

DAVE. All right. (*Exit after LIZBETH*)

JOE. (*Entering door L.*) Jès' look at him, ma—he's got his eyebrows in it.

MRS. VERNON. (*At door; leans on JOE'S shoulder*) The darlin'—jès' to think, Joe, if one of our children was sufferin'—

JOE. (*With unction*) You bet.

MRS. VERNON. (*Earnestly calls*) Don't let him splash it on you, Jim—'t'll spot your clothes.

JOE. (*Pause admiringly*) Jim don't care a durn.

MRS. VERNON. There, I'll fix his bed. (*Getting coats from peg, back wall*) What's a man know, anyhow? (*Exit to shop*)

JOE. (*Gets tobacco from shelf*) She'll fix him all right—ha, ha!

JIM. (*Entering, looking back*) Say, Joe, women are great, ain't they? (*Stands admiringly in doorway*)

JOE. (*Slowly coming down, filling pipe*) Jim! (*Pause. JIM doesn't answer, only looks at JOE*) You an' me— (*Turns quickly and looks at JIM*) You an' me are goin' into the convention together? (*JIM nods once, and chews slowly*) Agin each other. (*Same bus. for JIM. Pause*) Smoke? (*Offers pipe*)

JIM. (*Takes cud from mouth; hesitates—returns it*) Chew.

JOE. Set down. (*They sit. JIM left of table—JOE R. in rocker*) There's somethin' I want to say to you jès' between ourselves.

(*Enter MRS. VERNON L.*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Comes back of table between the men*) I reckon he's comfortable.

JOE. Jim an' me's talkin' a minute, ma.

MRS. VERNON. (*Reassuredly*) Well, I got my work. (*Exit R.*)

JOE. Jim—(*JIM looks at him*) I been a figurin'

an' I've calculated they's a difference of about \$600 'tween you an' me.

JIM. (*Placidly*) How?

JOE. (*Rising, and closing door R. Returns*) When my Kate got through the public school, you said she ought to go to college. (JIM *nods*) I didn't think so—I admit now I was a durn fool. (JIM *nods*) You said she had to go—an' she went—to Linenwood. (JIM *chews*) When she come back she taught me everything I know—I don't think I could go afore this convention if it wasn't for what Kate's learned me—Jim, I'm ashamed to say so, but I let you pay her schoolin'—I've figured out it's a round six hundred dollars—an' I'm goin' to pay you every—

JIM. (*Impressively points at him with his whole hand*) See here—(*After a fateful pause; rises*) Don't you ever say that to me agen. (*Turns away*)

JOE. (*Half rising, anxiously*) Why, Jim?

JIM. (*Turning. Threatens*) Never.

JOE. 'Tain't nothin' to make trouble 'tween us, Jim.

JIM. (*Pauses—growls slowly*) Whatever I done—was done—have you ever said a word to **her** about it?

JOE. Nobody knows it, Jim, but you an' me.

JIM. Man to man?

JOE. Man to man.

JIM. (*Slightly relieved*) Well, I done it fur her—an' whenever I hear her purty voice—soft an' low like verses out of a book—whenever I look at her face—purtier than them pictures they put in the cigar boxes—and her hands soft and baby like—I feel 'way down here that I helped do some of that. An' do you think, Joe Vernon, that I'd sell out? No, sir, not by a damned sight!

JOE. But look here, Jim, think of me. We're going in that convention together—agin each other—for the same office, and if you was to tell—

JIM. (*Sharp turn*) Tell! Don't move—but jus' draw breath enough to take that back.

JOE. (*Putting out his hand*) Jim!

JIM. (*Pause*) Why if anybody'd said you could a thought them things!

JOE. (*Pleadingly*) Jim!

JIM. (*Long pause*) Well, there—(*Takes JOE's hand*)

(*Enter MRS. VERNON R. 3 E.*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Nervously*) Joe, I've a notion to holler to Kate to run home. I don't like her walkin' with that man.

JOE. What man?

MRS. VERNON. Why Travers. I don't know what Kate sees in him. (*Returns to door*)

JIM. (*Comfortingly*) Well, he's a city chap, and Kate's so smart about them things. Joe, how old is Kate?

JOE. Twenty, ain't she ma?

MRS. VERNON. (*In street door*) Lor' no—we ain't been married but nineteen.

JOE. Seems longer'n that to me.

(JIM looks at him, crossing to melodeon, shaking head.)

JIM. How old is she, Mrs. Vernon?

MRS. VERNON. They's fourteen months difference 'tween her an' Lizbeth.

(JIM looks at JOE again.)

JIM. Well, I've knowed her so long, she always seems jes' a little child to me—but Kate's old enough to be thinkin' o' gettin' married, ain't she?

MRS. VERNON. I was mother of two young uns when I was as old as Kate.

(JIM looks at JOE again. JOE is a mixture of pride and apology.)

JIM. (*Leans over back of chair*) You know if I had my way I'd like Kate to see *everything*. Go to St. Louis, and Europe, an' travel. I've often thought I'd like to be well enough off to take Kate an' jes' do nothin' but travel for a whole summer.

MRS. VERNON. Oh, folks'd talk about it, Jim.
(*Down R.*)

JIM. Why, I mean married—if Kate'd have me.

MRS. VERNON. (*Down*) Oh!

JOE. (*Explainingly*) Of course—'fore they started.

(JIM looks at JOE in amused disgust.)

JIM. An' you know, Mrs. Vernon, I've had it on the tip of my tongue a dozen times to ask her.

MRS. VERNON. (*Reflectively*) Well,—it might be the best thing that could happen to her. (*Pause*) Kate's been awful restless lately.

JOE. (*Heartily*) An' she likes you, Jim, better'n anybody.

JIM. Why, I *used* to think so, Joe, but since this feller's been in the town—(*Slowly crosses and sits on table C.*)

MRS. VERNON. Pshaw—I'll bet that mustach of his'n is dyed.

JOE. Don't think about him, Jim, 'cause if it comes to that, I'll put my foot down.

JIM. Not if Kate liked him.

JOE. Yes, no matter who liked him.

JIM. But I'd want her to like me.

JOE. Well, she does.

JIM. You think so.

JOE. Sure.

JIM. Dog gone it! I'd swap my poney for a trottin' horse, an' git one of them two-wheeled carts an'

practice in it till I wasn't seasick, and me an' Kate of a Sunday—say—driving through Bowling Green!

MRS. VERNON. (*Grinning in admiration*) Why, Jim! (*Down R.*)

JIM. (*Growing with his vision*) An' I'd run that south pyazza all around the house,—and dog gone it—we'd have a hired girl.

MRS. VERNON. (*Starting something*) That's the way to treat a woman, Joe Vernon, an' if you hadn't been brought up in Calloway County—

JOE. (*Completing*) Why, Jim, when we was fust married she was so jealous we couldn't keep a hired girl.

MRS. VERNON. (*Waving a hand at him*) I've got bravely over it. You kin git one now.

JOE. Well—we don't need one now.

(*Enter KATE D. F. R.*)

KATE. No, I'm not offended, Lizbeth, but it isn't kind.

JOE. What's the matter?

(*LIZBETH and DAVE appear outside of door and disappear slowly.*)

KATE. Nothing. (*Crossing R. of rocker*) Jim—

JIM. Katie.

KATE. You and father are trying for the Legislature? (*JIM nods*) A nomination in this county is as good as an election, isn't it?

JOE. (*Explaining*) On our ticket.

(*JIM nods.*)

KATE. You have been very kind to me—kinder than any man I know—you've stood up for me; and you've given me lots of handsome presents—

JIM. Well?—

KATE. You have been *very* kind—I like your sister Emily—as well as if she were my *own* sister—but Joe Vernon's my *father*—he's an older man than you are——

MRS. VERNON. (*Butting in*) Well, if he wasn't——

KATE. Wait, mother——(*To JIM*) I shall work for him. (*JIM nods*) In every possible way—I know a good many of these delegates—I know their wives—I shall see them.

JIM. (*Pause*) Does politics make any difference to you, Kate?

KATE. His election does. It means a step out of this life, a breath away from the shop—it means a broader horizon for me—— (*Turns away overcome by her feelings*)

JIM. (*Pause*) Well, Joe—I went in this thing to win——

JOE. Don't mind her, Jim.

JIM. I went in it to win—my friends kind a put it that way—an' it seems I ought to do my best for *them*—but—I wish you luck, old man,—I wouldn't take the nomination now—I didn't think Kate cared.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE:—VERNON'S *Blacksmith shop, adjoining his living-room. Forge 2 R. Door to living-room R. above forge. Bellows down stage below forge. Bench with vise at left. Big doors double up D. Trusses L. C. Tub of water back of anvil R. C.*

DISCOVERED:—JOE and CAL *beating weld of tire*; ESROM, a *half-witted negro*—absently *playing jew's-harp on trusses.*

JOE. (*Wearing boots and leather apron*) Hand me the traveller. (*Helper hands it and drops tire horizontally on anvil while JOE runs traveller around it inside*) Jes' the same size—give it another heat an' we'll beat her out a quarter inch. (*Crosses to L. C. Helper puts tire into fire and works bellows*) Esrom!

ESROM. Yes, sah.

JOE. I'm purty busy now, an' that tune—can't you let up till I'm through?

ESROM. Yes, sah.

JOE. (C.) An' while you're resting you might bring another bucket o' water an' dump it in this tub. (R. C.)

ESROM. (*Going*) Yes, sah—don't you really want to buy any mo' coke?

JOE. Not this morning, Esrom. (*Exit ESROM with jew's-harp playing*) Ready? (*Takes tire from fire and hammers weld out—when pounding is done traveller runs over it as before. Enter MRS. VERNON R. 3*)

MRS. VERNON. (R.) Joe, can't you leave that now?

JOE. Course I can't ma—it's Louisiana time now.

MRS. VERNON. Well, the breakfast's spilin'. (*Exit*)

JOE. (*Calling*) Well, it's Dave an' his durned alarm clock—if I'd let Kate set it—I guess she's all right now, Cal. (*Helper puts tire in fire—last heating—JOE goes to trusses and lays wheel square. Enter SARBER. SARBER wears linen duster and boots and carries a whip*) Hello, Bill.

SARBER. (*Down L.*) Hello, Joe—mighty nigh time. (*Looking at watch*)

JOE. Won't be a minute longer—soon as we stretch her a little and drop her over this bunch of bones—

SARBER. (*Examining wheel*) Hello, Cal? (*Helper nods*) Fellers ain't hurt?

JOE. (L. C.) Nothin' ain't hurt. (*Enter ESROM with water*) This wheel's got as purty a dish as I ever see.

SARBER. Don't know why the durned weld broke.

JOE. Them steel tires are hard to make fast sometimes——

ESROM. Right heah, Joe.

JOE. Let her go.

(*ESROM pours water into tub.*)

ESROM. (*Coaxingly*) No coke dis mawnin'?

JOE. No. (*ESROM exit L. C. To SARBER, pointing to dog under bench L.*) Ever see that chap before?

SARBER. The dog?

JOE. Yes.

SARBER. Is that the same one I dropped the rail on?

JOE. (*Nods*) Me an' Jim put his leg in splinters last night.

SARBER. (*Shaking head and smiling*) Jim!

JOE. (*Pointing to coach*) Looks like you been in the real estate business, Bill.

SARBER. Well, yes—we took a turn or two at it.

(*Enter BOLLINGER L. U. E.*)

BOLLINGER. Hello, Sarber, when's your ingine start?

SARBER. Joe's fixin' one of her drivers.

JOE. (*Looking towards forge*) Won't be a minute, Tom.

BOLLINGER. Everybody waiting at the drug-store—we want to go 'fore it gets too hot,—folks says you're hanging back so Clark kin sell out his sody water.

SARBER. (*Looking at watch*) Shake her up, Joe.

JOE. I guess we're ready. (*Two negroes of a quartette enter and stand idly about. Takes tire with helper*) Get out of the way. (*Drops tire on wheel and adjusts it. Drives pin through one hole. KELLY enters, looks at coach and nervously about*)

JOE. What's new Tom, about Sam Fowler?

BOLLINGER. (*Looking at work*) Papers say the company has let him go.

JOE. Scott free?

BOLLINGER. Yes.

JOE. Then he'll have to pay his own board now.

BOLLINGER. I reckon.

(*JOE and helper carry wheel to tub and chill the tire.*)

SARBER. Think she'll stay now?

JOE. As soon as we get the bolts in her. (*Two other negroes enter, completing the male quartette. Enter TRAVERS*) Look out.

(*They lift wheel to trusses, and silently adjust bolts. As this takes time the negroes fill in with songs.*)

TRAVERS. (*Coming down with KELLY R.*) Well, what's up?

KELLY. I'm goin' to skip on this stage.

TRAVERS. Why?

KELLY. Too hot, see papers?

TRAVERS. No.

KELLY. Well, young Sam Fowler will know you the minute he sees you—and he's comin' back to-day.

TRAVERS. He can't get here till to-night, on account of the wash-outs—I'm going to risk it.

KELLY. Well, I quit you.

TRAVERS. I risk more than you.

KELLY. All right, but you don't risk me. You

went in the car like a blamed fool without a thing on your face——

(VILLAGERS at door.)

TRAVERS. Be careful.

KELLY. Careful? I skip.

(They turn up R. Enter JIM L. U. E.)

BOLLINGER. Hello, Jim—Louisiana?

JIM. No. (*Kneels by dog box*)

SARBER. Hello, Jim?

JIM. Ain't you late?

SARBER. Joe's keeping me.

JIM. (*Pointing to door*) Big load this mornin'?

SARBER. Yes, if they all go. (*Returns to wheel.*

JIM goes in house R.)

KELLY. (*Coming down with TRAVERS*) You'd risk your neck for that girl?

TRAVERS. I'm all right Kelly. I'll get out to-night, but I've got to see her first

(They go up and exeunt.)

BOLLINGER. Joe.

JOE. Yes.

BOLLINGER. (*Looking off carefully*) I see Jim last night after we left here. He says he's out of the race for legislature.

JOE. That's what he says.

BOLLINGER. Why?

JOE. Well, what did he say?

BOLLINGER. Personal reasons.

JOE. Well, that goes—all right, Cal,—put her on now, an' let 'em get out.

(Wheel is done—CAL takes it up to coach.)

BOLLINGER. Well, you're jes' as good as elected then, Joe.

JOE. Think so?

BOLLINGER. Sure. See here. (*Aside*) Folks down in Louisiana thinks Jim will be the nominee. I'm goin' down to-day to bet fifteen or twenty dollars he won't, 'fore they hear of it.

JOE. No promises.

BOLLINGER. No, sir-ee—put up, or shut up—I've got twenty-two and a half in my pocket—some of it's Clark's, but blamed little.

(*Re-enter JIM with pan of milk—kneels by dog and feeds it.*)

SARBER. Now stand out of the way there.

BOLLINGER. Goin', Bill?

SARBER. Soon as we hitch.

(*They take wagon out.* BOLLINGER, KELLY, TRAVERS and SARBER go out with wagon.)

JOE. Come Cal—(*CAL turns*) Hash! (*CAL exit R. 3*) Breakfast, Jim.

JIM. Had it.

JOE. Come, set with us. (*Exit, followed by JIM*)

(*Enter TRAVERS.*)

TRAVERS. Kelly is right, I should go on that coach—but—I must see Kate—they're at breakfast—if I only—yes, just a minute. (*Beckons KATE*) I wish that fellow wasn't here.

(*Enter KATE R. 3.*)

KATE. Mr Travers.

TRAVERS. I should leave on that coach.

KATE. Do I keep you?

TRAVERS. Yes.

KATE. Why?

TRAVERS. Because when I leave Bowling Green now I shall never come back.

KATE. You—you are jesting.

TRAVERS. In dead earnest. (*Slight clatter of dishes—KATE looks off R.*) Do you care for that man?

KATE. (*Coming down*) I admire him. I think he is a good and a noble character.

TRAVERS. Better than I am.

KATE. He may be,—but—I don't love him—

TRAVERS. Do you love me?

SARBER. (*Off*) All ready, get in

KATE. The stage is going. (*KATE turns*)

TRAVERS. Do you love me?

SARBER. Get in.

TRAVERS. Do you?

KATE. (*Pause*) Yes.

TRAVERS. Then let them leave—(*SARBER calling "git up"—and a whip cracks. We hear stage-voices go*) Will you go with me—to-night?

KATE. How—go with you?

TRAVERS. As my wife.

KATE. But why such haste? Why go as if we feared anything?

TRAVERS. I must go to-night. Great interests depend upon it. I know your people don't like me, but I haven't time to humor them. Will you go?

KATE. Let me think till then.

TRAVERS. Yes, good-bye till to-night. (*Holds her hand—she turns as if to leave*) Kate! Kate! Good-bye. (*Impulsive turn and embrace*) till to-night.

(*Enter DAVE, from breakfast.*)

DAVE. Huh! (*Shortly; more a chuck than an exclamation. The lovers start*) Oh! Seminary!

(TRAVERS *exit* L. U. E.)

DAVE. (*Embarrassed—nodding off*) Breakfast.

KATE. Thank you. (*Exit* R. 3)

DAVE. (*Going to bench and beginning work on shaft with draw knife*) Well—Lizbeth don't know so blamed much about books—(*Shakes head*) But—huh—(*Shakes head again*) I tell you—(*Works hard—enter LIZBETH with pan, which she puts on forge*)

DAVE. (*Commanding*) Come here, Lizbeth.

LIZBETH. (*Crosses to DAVE. Pause*) What? (*Falling inflection*)

DAVE. (*Cautiously, approving her*) Why, dog gone it—(*Shakes head*) Huh! (*Swaggers*) I tell you—(*Works*)

LIZBETH. (*Wonderingly*) What's the matter?

DAVE. (*Threatening*) If you was to say semi-nary to me—(*Swaggers*) Huh! (*Works*)

LIZBETH. (*After pause*) What?

DAVE. (*Ominously*) Why, Lizbeth, the sooner we git married an' git out o' this the better.

LIZBETH. (*Hopelessly*) Well, what kin I do?

DAVE. (*Working*) Dog gone it—if I had a stidy job!

LIZBETH. (*Understandingly*) I know that, Dave. (*Goes back to pan*)

DAVE. (*Bragging*) An' you bet your father knows it.

LIZBETH. (*Portentously*) Well, I told *ma*—

DAVE. An' that's what he said. If I had a stidy job—

(*Enter EM'LY* L. U.)

EM'LY. Hello—

DAVE. Why how de do?

LIZBETH. Can't you come in?

EM'LY. Who's there? (*Indicates kitchen*)

LIZBETH. Only the folks and Jim.

EM'LY. I want Jim—say—Sam's there. (*Off*)

LIZBETH. Sam Fowler!—Oh ma—(*Exits R.*)

DAVE. Sam—why see here. Sam! (*Goes up*)

(*SAM enters. Wears express blue and a cap.*)

EM'LY. (*Beckoning*) Sam!

(*DAVE brings SAM down. Enter JOE R., followed by MRS. VERNON, LIZBETH and KATE.*)

JOE. (*Heartily*) Sam, Sam, how are you?

SAM. (*Shaking hands*) I didn't know how you'd feel about it.

MRS. VERNON. (*Shaking*) Why Lor', Sam—I'm glad—I'll bet Em'ly kissed him.

(*KATE and LIZBETH shake hands with SAM. Enter JIM—EM'LY runs to him.*)

EM'LY. Jim!

(*JIM puts his left arm around EM'LY and sits on anvil.*)

SAM. (*Approaching and taking JIM's hand, smiling*) You didn't think I done it did you, Jim?

JIM. (*Nods at EM'LY*) No, not while *she's* keepin' house for me—ha, ha!

EM'LY. He's *always* stood up for you, Sam.

JOE. Well, tell us 'bout it, Sam. Did the papers have it right?

(*They are a semi-circle about SAM.*)

SAM. Yes, purty near.

JOE. Did you help the feller into your car?

SAM. Yes, we were just pulling out of the depot

when he came a runnin' up to my side door with an order from the superintendent for me to carry him as fur as Vinita. He ran alongside and put his hand up, so of course I pulled him into the car.

EM'LY. Wasn't you scared, Sam?

SAM. Why no—I thought he belonged to the company and he went to work with me sorting and fixing my express stuff.

JOE. Well, I'm durned.

SAM. (*Intensely serious*) I joked with him—just like I'm joking with you—he was one of the nicest fellows I ever saw.

JOE. (*Wide eyed with gossip*) Don't that beat everything?

SAM. When we were eighteen or twenty miles out an' I was stoopin' this way over a box—I felt him on my back and grabbing at my arms—why, why—even then I thought he was jokin' and I looked around laughin', and here was his gun pokin' right into my face.

MRS. VERNON. (*Haunted*) Just think of it.

JOE. Then he tied you.

SAM. What could I do? There was his gun—and I wasn't even on my feet—anybody could tie a fellow that way—I could tie *you*, couldn't I? (*To JIM*)

JIM. If you had the gun?

SAM. Yes.

JIM. Well, rather

SAM. (*Indignantly*) The ropes cut clean through here at my wrists, and there was a mark over one eye where I fell against the safe—and then the company said I was an accomplice.

JOE. Then I s'pose he jis' deliberately packed his little valise full of green backs and—(*Pantomimes*)—got out!

SAM. A hundred and twenty thousand—

JOE. Jump off?

SAM. No—got off at a water tank.

JIM. I s'pose you'd know him agin?

SAM. Anywhere.

LIZBETH. (*With nursery alarm*) He must a looked terrible.

SAM. (*Common place*) Well, he didn't—nice a lookin' feller as you want to see. Black mustache—kind a curly hair—looked a little bit you know like a race horse man.

EM'LY. The company said Sam wrote the superintendent's order himself.

SAM. Oh yes—got an expert to swear it looked like my writing.

EM'LY. 'Tain't a bit—like it.

JIM. (*To EM'LY*) Did you see it?

SAM. No, but I showed her part of the letter he wrote to the newspaper saying I was innocent. (*Feels in pocket*) Ain't that strange? Seems to be a kind hearted fellow.

MRS. VERNON. Jes' drove to it I s'pose by drink.

SAM. Here it is. (*Hands paper to JIM*)

JIM. Hello! (*Looks at KATE.*)

JOE. What is it?

(*JIM hands paper to KATE.*)

KATE. (*After slight start—haughtily*) What do you mean?

JIM. Oh, not you, Kate. (*Smiling, to SAM*) 'Twasn't Kate dressed up like a man—no! (*General laugh*) Oh, I didn't think that. (*KATE vexed, goes up-stage. JIM in whisper to others*) Mad? (*JOE shakes his head—JIM nods interrogatively to MRS. VERNON*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Looking after KATE*) Well, I can't see why.

(*Exit KATE.*)

JIM. (*After another look after KATE—to SAM*)

Well, I suppose you know you're watched.

SAM. (*Indifferently*) How's that?

JIM. There's a Pinkerton here— come last night—had a letter to me from the Chief—sayin' they knew of me an' hoped I'd co-operate with this fellow in watchin' you—and they'd pay well for it.

SAM. (*Smiling*) What did you say?

(JIM shakes head—goes up c.)

EM'LY Why, Jim kicked him off—of our stoop.

(*General laugh—LIZBETH crosses to forge and gets pan. ESROM enters playing Jew's-harp.*)

ESROM. What about the coke, Mistah Vernon?

JOE. (*At forge*) Don't want none. (*Suddenly*) See here; look at this clinker.

ESROM. Can't understand that—shouldn't ought to be no clinker in dat coke.

JOE. Well, there it is—hard as flint.

ESROM. (*Examines clinker*) Funny clinker.

JOE. Well, there it is.

JIM. Hold on, Joe. I shouldn't wonder if that was that gumbo.

JOE. What gumbo?

JIM. The poultice. I throwed it among that coke.

JOE. Yes, here's some only half burned.

ESROM. (*Going*) I knowed they shouldn't ought to be no clinker.

JOE. But look at this red piece—as hard as a rock.

JIM. (*Half startled*) Why Joe—(*Looks at him*)

JOE. What?

JIM. Well, nothing—

MRS. VERNON. Well, what about breakfast, everybody?

JOE. Let's finish it—come Sam—

SAM. I've had mine.

JOE. Well, come talk to us.

SAM. (*Going*) All right—got heaps to tell you.

LIZBETH. How do you like the Southern Hotel?

(*Exeunt all but DAVE and JIM. JIM takes clinker and turns it carefully over in his hand. Then looks through forge—goes to bench near dog, and gets on hands and knees looking under it.*)

DAVE. What you lost?

JIM. Here it is—(*Rises*) Some more of that gumbo. (*Crosses to forge*)

DAVE. What you goin' to do?

JIM. Burn it. (*Looks about as if hunting help*) Here—come pump this.

(*DAVE crosses and takes bellows.*)

DAVE. What do you want to burn it for?

JIM. (*Ignoring question*) Say, Dave—

DAVE. (*Working bellows*) Well?

JIM. You know them old coal mines down by Jonesburg?

DAVE. Yes.

JIM. What do they sell that slack for?

DAVE. They don't *sell* it—they *give* it to anyone that'll haul it away.

JIM. I wonder if they wouldn't deliver it if you took a good deal.

DAVE. Don't know.

(*JIM whistles cheerily a moment and examines gumbo burning.*)

JIM. (*Pause. Sitting on anvil*) You seem under the weather, Dave.

DAVE. (*Moodily*) Oh, I'd be all right, if I had a stidy job.

JIM. (*Laughing*) A steady job!—why you've been workin' nights ever since I knew you.

DAVE. I know—but Joe says—I—I ought to have a stidy job.

JIM. What's Joe got to do with it?

DAVE. Well—Lizbeth—

JIM. (*Amused*) Oh!

DAVE. An' I think I could get one only he don't gimme no time off to look fur it.

JIM. Wait a minute. (*Takes gumbo from fire*)
Yes sir—she's gettin' hot. (*Puts it back and whistles a tune*)

DAVE. I've almost made a set o' furniture myself.

JIM. Have eh?

DAVE. Dug it out with that little draw knife. I tell you—you can make anything that's made out of wood—with a draw knife.

JIM. (*On anvil again*) Well, it seems to me, Dave, that you're going at it the wrong way.

DAVE. How's that?

JIM. The old man won't give his consent till you git a steady job.

DAVE. That's it—

JIM. And you want a steady job so's you can marry Lizbeth?

DAVE. Exactly.

JIM. Well, you marry—marry Lizbeth and you'll have a steady job. (*Gets down. DAVE, absorbed with the idea, pumps vigorously*) Hold on! (*DAVE stops, JIM takes gumbo from fire with tongs and plunges it in the water*) Yes sir, there it is—hard as a rock—and ain't it a purty color?

DAVE. What you goin' to do with it?

JIM. I don't know but if the Wabash could get enough of it to ballast that track that washes out every spring, I think they'd take it.

DAVE. (*In admiration*) Well, I'm durned. The raw gumbo is all along their track. Wouldn't cost you nothin', would it?

JIM. Not if I kin get that Jonesburg slack—ha, ha!

DAVE. Why, that's great!

JIM. (*Drawing watch*) It's a half hour before train time. I'll jump to St. Louis with the scheme. (*Stands thinking*)

DAVE. (*Going*) I got to get the leather put on this shaft—but that's great. (*Exit. KATE appears in outside door*)

KATE. (*Coming toward JIM, who is turning gumbo thoughtfully in his hands*) Jim!

JIM. Why Kate—(*Gumbo*) See here—how's this for an idea?

KATE. What did you mean—by this? (*She extends letter*)

JIM. Why, just that. I thought it looked like his writin', same back hand, and no shadin' to it.

KATE. How could Mr. Travers have written it?

JIM. Why, no use gettin' mad, Kate. It kin look like his writin', can't it?

KATE. (*Going to anvil and leaning on back of it*) You don't like him, Jim, do you?

JIM. (*Picks up old horse-shoe*) Well—(*Mechanically pounds gumbo with horse-shoe*)

KATE. (*Pause*) Not much—

JIM. No—not a great deal, Kate.

KATE. (*Displaying the letter*) Do you think he's a bad enough man to have done this?

JIM. Well, a fellow who takes a risk like that—to clear another man who's been arrested in his place ain't so bad.

KATE. A train robber!

JIM. Why I don't say he done it.

KATE. But you think so.

JIM. (*Laughing*) Oh no, I don't—there's a ten thousand dollar reward for the right man.

KATE. Then why hand this letter to me? Why imply it?

JIM. Why, Kate, I'm a friend of—your pa's—I've known you ever since you was eight or ten years

old. I don't know this man Travers—you don't know him. He comes to your house.

KATE. Well.

JIM. Comes to see you, don't he?

KATE. (*Getting in front of anvil*) He does—what of it?

JIM. Why—I don't think I'd like a preacher of the Gospel if he was to do that. (*Pause*) I—I never meant to say anything—but when men—*other* men—I mean anybody gets to payin' you attention, why I'm afraid to keep still any longer—

KATE. (*Turns away R.*) To keep still—

JIM. (*Advances*) Yes, I've been sheriff here, an' whenever I've had anything to do, I've said to myself, now don't—do anything—ugly—'cause Kate—(*KATE turns toward him—he qualifies tone*) some day you know—Kate might think more of me if I hadn't done it. You know yourself that I quit drinkin' a year before the local option—on account of that essay you read examination day—why Kate I care more for how *you* feel about anything than I do for anybody in the State of Mizzoura—that's just how it is. (*Pause. KATE is silent*) You kin remember yourself when you was a little girl an' I used to take a horse-shoe an' tie it on the anvil an' make a side saddle for you—an' I reckon I was the first fellow in Bowling Green that ever called you *Miss* Kate when you come back from school.

KATE. (*Rather tenderly*) I didn't want you to call me Miss Kate, Jim.

JIM. Jes' fun, you know—an' now Kate, when you're a woman an' it's only nature for men to like you,—I've got to ask you myself.

KATE. (*Pause*) I'm awful sorry you did it, Jim.

JIM. Sorry!

KATE. Yes, because I like you well enough, Jim—but—(*Pause. Enter JOE. KATE stops*)

JOE. Say Jim—

JIM. (*Motioning JOE to silence*) Go on, Kate—I ain't ashamed of it—before Joe.

KATE. That's all there is to it—I just like you.

JIM. Well, I didn't know—you used to let me kiss you—

KATE. Yes, when I was coming home from school—I did. I thought I was going to love you then. But there was the school. (*Pause*) If I hadn't gone to Lindenwood I might have thought so still. But we could never be happy together, Jim—you haven't had proper advantages I know, and it isn't your fault. My *education* has put the barrier between us. Those four years at the Seminary—

JOE. (*Indignantly*) Why, Kate Vernon—everything you know Jim Radburn—

JIM. (*Imperatively*) Hold on—(*Pause*) You've heard her say no, and—that lets you out. As far as I'm concerned—why Kate's nearly right. I don't know any more'n the law allows—but—that's for Kate to say—

(JIM *extends his hand in appeal to* KATE. KATE *turns her back to audience—leans on anvil, firmly shakes her head no—*JIM *motions silence to* JOE; *makes a struggle and pulls himself together—turns and kneels by dog, caressing it.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III.

SCENE:—*Same as ACT I, but tidy. Doors closed and lamp lighted. Song in Blacksmith Shop before rise of curtain.*

DISCOVERED:—DAVE and LIZBETH *playing checkers on home-made board down c.* EM'LY and SAM *looking on.* JOE *reading at L.* KATE *in walking dress looking out window.* MRS. VERNON *with glasses mending some garments.*

JOE. (*Annoyed by song—frets. Goes to the door*) Here, you boys—don't hang around that shop; go up in the square an' sing.

MRS. VERNON. What you sen' 'em away fur?

JOE. Oh, it's one o' them blamed "mother" songs. Nobody ever sings anything about father—except the "Old man's drunk again," or somethin' like that.

DAVE. Your move, Lizbeth.

LIZBETH. (*Petulantly*) Don't I know it?

SAM. Move there.

DAVE. Hold on, I can't beat both of you.

LIZBETH. Don't tell me, Sam. I'd a moved there anyway. Come on, Dave.

KATE. (*Solus*) A whole hour longer; I cannot wait.

MRS. VERNON. What's fretting you, Kate?

KATE. Everything.

MRS. VERNON. (*Indicates the melodeon*) Play something.

KATE. I can't play on that melodeon, mother.

MRS. VERNON. Poor old melodeon! for all the music we git out of it—might as well be a folding bed.

ESROM. (*Appearing at window*) I knowed they oughtn't be any clinker in that coke.

JOE. (*From his paper*) That's all right, Esrom.

ESROM. Don't want no mo' coke, Mistah?

JOE. No, no, no!

(ESROM *hands* KATE *a letter.*)

ESROM. (*Whispering*) He—he wants an answer.

DAVE. Hold on!

LIZBETH. Well, it's a king!

DAVE. Yes—but I move first.

(*A knock at street door.*)

JOE. Come in.

(*Enter JIM.*)

MRS. VERNON. Good-evenin'.

JOE. (*Not turning*) Who is it?

JIM. You're all here, are you?

JOE. (*Rising*) Hello, Jim.

JIM. (*To JOE*) Hello. (*EM'LY goes to him—he puts his arm about her*) How long you been here?

EM'LY. All day.

JIM. What?

(*JOE goes to the shelf at back and fills his pipe.*)

EM'LY. So's Sam.

SAM. Mrs. Vernon made us stay to dinner. Then supper.

JOE. Sam didn't feel like seeing the town folks.

JIM. Why?

SAM. Well, I didn't know how they'd feel about it.

JIM. What, think you did do it?

SAM. I didn't know.

JIM. That's just the reason; why, if you hang back, what can they do?

MRS. VERNON. (*Explaining*) Well, Em'ly was here.

JIM. I know, but Sam ought to have spunk to face 'em. It's got to come and you might as well know where your friends are.

JOE. That's so.

SAM. (*Starting to door*) Well, I reckon most of 'em's up at the drug store.

JIM. (*Emphatically*) Walk right in amongst 'em.

SAM. Dog gone it! I ain't ashamed, but if they hint any thing I'd feel like smashing 'em—huh!

JIM. You got to.

SAM. All right. (*Exit*)

JIM. Don't let me stop the game.

LIZBETH. Dave thinks all night.

EM'LY (*To JIM, pulling him around*) Where have you been?

JIM. St. Louis. Been to see the railroad people. Say, Joe!

JOE. Yes?

JIM. Sam's got the express people scared.

JOE. How's that?

JIM. Hearin' I was his friend they hinted to me that they'd like to square it.

JOE. Compromise.

JIM. (*Nodding his head*) I worked it up for him. Said Bollinger was a regular terror.

EM'LY. Will the express company have to pay Sam?

JIM. Well, rather. And after they do, Sam ought to go down to their president's office and kick 'em all around the back yard.

(*Exit KATE door R.*)

JOE. What's ailing Kate?

MRS. VERNON. Seems out o' sorts—mebbe she'll tell me alone. (*Exit*)

DAVE. (*Protesting*) You can't move backwards.

LIZBETH. Well?

DAVE. That's cornered.

JOE. He's got you, Lizbeth.

JIM. Dave!

DAVE. Yes?

JIM. I saw the Wabash folks.

DAVE. Have a talk with them?

JIM. (*Hands DAVE a paper*) Yes—there's a memorandum agreement—they'll take all I can give 'em at thirty dollars a car load.

JOE. What's that?

(*JIM takes a piece of gumbo from pocket and hands it to JOE.*)

JIM. (*To DAVE*) Now I've got a proposition for you.

DAVE. What?

JIM. You superintend the burnin' of the stuff, and I'll take you in.

DAVE. Why, Jim—(*Rises in delight*)

JOE. What's this fur?

JIM. Ballast.

JOE. Ballast?

JIM. Yes, that road bed that washes out.
(*Pause*) Thirty dollars a car.

JOE. What!

JIM. Me an' Dave.

DAVE. Why, Jim, I ain't got no claim on you.

JIM. You pumped the bellows this morning while I burned it.

DAVE. Well—

JIM. And you want a steady job, don't you?

DAVE. Well—(*"I should say so," understood—turns to him*)

JOE. But see here—(*JIM looks at him—waits*)
—You goin' into this?

JIM. Wouldn't you, if you got the contract?

JOE. But Dave—Dave's helpin' me!

JIM. You told him to git a job, didn't you?

JOE. Yes—but——

LIZBETH. (*Ready for a fight*) An' that's what you told me.

JIM. (*Abetting LIZBETH*) Yes.

JOE. But my business needs somebody.

JIM. Then why don't you let them git married?

JOE. An' me support them?

JIM. (*In disgust*) Hell!——

JOE. What's the matter?

JIM. Ain't he worth his wages?

JOE. I never said he wasn't.

JIM. (*In superlative display*) And he's made nearly a whole set of furniture.

JOE. But if I went to Jefferson I was goin' to leave this shop with Dave.

LIZBETH (*With pride*) Dave!

JIM. Well, that's different. See here! You let 'em get married. I only want Dave to superintend this burnin'—it won't take two half days a week to kind a look it over—we kin get niggers to do the work, and Dave kin stay here.

LIZBETH. Dave!——

DAVE. (*Hushing her*) Sh——

JOE. Well, I'll think it over and——

JIM. (*Positively*) No!

JOE. No?

JIM. I can't fool with you, Joe; he gits the girl or we quit.

LIZBETH. An' the girl goes too.

JOE. What?

JIM. Yes, the girl goes too. (*Pause and smile*) It's your say, Joe. (*Foot on chair*) Well, Joe, it's up to you.

JOE. (*Giving up*) Well, I can't help it.

JIM. (*Passing the approval to DAVE and LIZBETH*) There's your girl. And you've got a stiddy job! (*DAVE and LIZBETH half embrace*) What do

you think of that? (*To JOE, who is mechanically looking at gumbo*) Thirty dollars per car.

JOE. (*Glad to change the subject*) Thirty, eh?

JIM. Every per car—and see here—Joe——

JOE. What?

JIM. (*Draws second paper from pocket*) I've fixed up a kind of a resignation here.

JOE. Resignation?

JIM. Yes. I can't tend to this new business and do much work as sheriff, so I'm goin' to resign the sheriff part of it.

JOE. You mustn' do it, Jim—why you've been keepin' the district like a prayer meeting!

JIM. Well, somebody else kin sing the Doxology—you turn that into the council fur me.

(*Enter KATE and MRS. VERNON R. 3 E.*)

MRS. VERNON. I've put my foot down, Kate,—you can't go.

KATE. I *am* going.

MRS. VERNON. Joe Vernon, it's time you took a hand a managin' this family.

JOE. What's the matter?

MRS. VERNON. I've told Kate she can't go out.

JOE. Well, Ma,—Kate ain't a child.

MRS. VERNON. Your carelessness'll make her disgrace the whole family.

JOE. Hol' on, ma.

MRS. VERNON. I know what I'm talking about. I see that nigger give Kate a letter.

JOE. Why, he don't know how to write.

MRS. VERNON. You don't suppose I think the nigger wrote it! It's from some one else.

JOE. Who is it from, Kate?

KATE. I don't care to tell. I'm going out. (*L. C. starts R.*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Interposes*) No, Kate, you ain't.

JOE. Why, ma—if Kate wants to go walkin'—

MRS. VERNON. All right, she kin walk. But getting letters sneaked to her and going out to meet a man's another thing. (*Persuasively going to her*) Why don't you tell, Kate?

KATE. (*Down to end of table R.*) No one has a right to my letters.

JOE. Of course not. No *right*, Kate, but your ma's naturally anxious, and she's only tryin' for your good.

KATE. (*Ready to weep*) I'm awfully tired of it.

JOE. But you kin tell me—you ain't ashamed of it, air you?

KATE. No, I'm not!

MRS. VERNON. It's Travers, ain't it?

JOE. (*Coaxing*) Is it, Kate?

KATE. Yes, it is.

JOE. Well, there, ma—see (*Walks away as tho' matter were closed. Crossing L.*)

MRS. VERNON. Air you losin' you senses, Joe Vernon?

JOE. (*Irritated*) The girl's tole you, ain't she?

MRS. VERNON. And jes' what I thought, too. She's goin' to meet him.

KATE. Well, what of it? You're polite enough to his face.

MRS. VERNON. Of course, if he'll come here like a man. But when I was a gurl—it'd a been an insult fur a man to send a note askin' her to meet him after dark.

JOE. (*Loudly chaffing*) Oh, ma—now don't forget—

MRS. VERNON. You upholdin' her? Jim, that's the way I have to fight to keep this family straight. What's *your* opinion?

JIM. Well, 'tain't no business o' mine, Mrs. Vernon, and—

MRS. VERNON. Do you like his looks?

IN MIZZOURA.

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JIM. (*Pause*) He ain't jes' my kind—but ~~may~~ be he don't like mine.

MRS. VERNON. Do you uphold his sending letters to Kate?

JIM. Why, Mrs. Vernon, I can't blame other men fur likin' Kate.

MRS. VERNON. Meetin' them after dark?

JIM. Kate knows how I feel about her—(*Pause*) And if *she* wanted my opinion I'd give it to her—but on the other hand—I've got an awful lot o' confidence in Kate.

MRS. VERNON. Why don't you answer his letter, Kate, an' say you'll be happy to receive him at your home? He won't think none the less of you.

KATE. I've promised to meet him, and I'm going to keep the appointment.

MRS. VERNON. Is she, Joe?

JOE. Well, Ma, I can't tie her.

MRS. VERNON. Take Lizbeth with you.

KATE. I don't want Lizbeth with me.

LIZBETH. I won't play proprietary for her!

KATE. (*Starting up*) I'm going alone. (*Crosses R.*)

MRS. VERNON. (*With her back to street door*) Not this door, you ain't.

KATE. Then the other. (*Exit, followed by Mrs. VERNON*)

MRS. VERNON. (*As she disappears by door R.*) We'll see!

(*Enter BOLLINGER from street.*)

BOLLINGER. (*In great excitement*) Say, boys—man killed up at Clark's—

JOE. (*Catching the thrill*) Man killed?

BOLLINGER. Yes.

LIZBETH and EM'LY. Oh!

JOE. Run over?

BOLLINGER. Shot.

ALL. Shot!

BOLLINGER. (*Revelling in the gossip*) Travers shot him. Sam Fowler came in the drug store and the minute he saw him he said "That's the man robbed my car——"

JIM. (*Quietly*) What's he look like?

BOLLINGER. (*Impatiently*) Why, Travers—Sam says that's the man—and Travers started for the window—stepped right into the perfumery case, then on the sody water counter, and this fellow grabbed him. First we see Travers had his gun right against the fellow's neck and—bang—he turned around with both hands up, this way, and kneels down right at Bill Saber's feet.

EM'LY. And Sam?

BOLLINGER. Oh, Sam's all right—say, kin one of you boys lend me a gun—we're huntin' fur him.

JOE. Hunting who?

BOLLINGER. (*Intolerant of Joe's stupidity*) Why, Travers.

JIM. (*In quiet contrast*) Where'd he go?

BOLLINGER. Right through the window—knocked over both them green lights—kicked a box o' lickish all over the sidewalk—kin you spare one?

JOE. (*Bustling about*) I ain't got but one, and I reckon I'll take a hand myself.

JIM. (*To EM'LY*) Come, little gal, we got to go home.

JOE. (*At door R. Calls*) Ma—ma!—Say, Jim, you can't resign to-night—I knowed they'd be trouble if you quit.

JIM. Better meet at the Court House. (*Exit with EM'LY and passes window going L.*)

(*Enter MRS. VERNON.*)

JOE. Where's my gun?

MRS. VERNON. What you want it fur?

JOE. (*Who is running a circle*) What do you s'pose—fry eggs? Where is it?

LIZBETH. Travers killed a man.

MRS. VERNON. (*Adding her part to the hub-bub*) Lor'! Travers!

JOE. Where is it, Lizbeth?

BOLLINGER. Ain't you got anything you kin lend me?

MRS. VERNON. Here it is. (*Hands gun*)

JOE. Loaded?

MRS. VERNON. Don't pint it.

JOE. That—the butt end—come on!

BOLLINGER. A butcher knife's better than nothing.

LIZBETH. Here! (*Hands knife to BOLLINGER.*)

DAVE. (*As LIZBETH holds him*) You don't think I'm scared.

(*Exeunt BOLLINGER and JOE.*)

MRS. VERNON. I don't want you to shoot anybody, Joe, pint it in the air.

(*DAVE exit; when off calls "Good-bye!"*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Impatient in doorway*) I can't see what business it is of Dave's when they's three policemen in town; uniforms—where's Em'ly?

LIZBETH. Jim took her home.

MRS. VERNON. Did somebody say Travers?

LIZBETH. Yes.

(*Enter KATE R.*)

KATE. What is it?

LIZBETH. Travers shot a man.

KATE. What man—why?

MRS. VERNON. (*Accusingly*) Jus' natural deviltry—purty pass things is coming to!

KATE. Whom did he shoot?

LIZBETH. We don't know—shot him here, in the neck.

(Enter SARBER from street, hurriedly)

SARBER. Hello, where's the boys?

MRS. VERNON. Have they ketch'd him?

SARBER. Don't know—we're all huntin'—(*Starts off*)

KATE. (*Quickly*) Mr. Sarber—

SARBER. Eh?

KATE. Who is hurt?

SARBER. (*Shouting*) Don't know his name—Clark stuffed the hole full of cotton. (*Indicating neck*) Says City'll have to pay for his green lights and lickorish.

KATE. Did Mr. Travers shoot the man?

SARBER. Yes'm—nearer than you an' me—which way'd they go?

LIZBETH. Court House.

SARBER. Been an awful hot day. (*Exit*)

KATE. (*In haunted fear*) What have you heard about it?

MRS. VERNON. Why it don't surprise me, Kate.

LIZBETH. They say Travers is the *train robber*—

KATE. Lizbeth!

LIZBETH. Sam Fowler knew him the minute he saw him—that's why Travers had to shoot—to git away!

MRS. VERNON. Not Sam?

LIZBETH. No, didn't shoot Sam.

KATE. There has been some mistake—these people have never liked Mr. Travers.

MRS. VERNON. I knowed he'd bring disgrace on the whole house, Kate. (*Getting sun-bonnet*) I'll go in through Mrs. Clark's back way—*she'll* know—come, Kate, I'm your mother, and a mother never deserts her child. (*In stage heroics*)

KATE. (*Recoiling*) I don't care to go.

LIZBETH. Take me, ma.

MRS. VERNON. Come on. (*Exit with LIZBETH*)

KATE. (*In wild-eyed panic*) Oh, how dreadful! This is what I have felt coming all the day. It is my fault too. If I had said yes last night, or only gone with him this morning—it couldn't have happened. How horrible!—killed a man! They didn't tell me whom. I—I wonder if my name was mentioned? They said—*Lizbeth* said—a *train-robber*—(*She leans on table for support*) That letter! Jim thought the writing looked like his. Jim—Jim has told others his suspicion—Yes—Jim Radburn has done it! I see! I see! Jim hated him—they have persecuted him for *me*—Oh! Oh! Why did I not go last night?

(*Enter TRAVERS, pale and breathless—revolver in hand. He closes the door behind him.*)

TRAVERS. Kate!

KATE. Oh!

TRAVERS. Who's there? (*Points toward shop*)

KATE. No one. What is the matter? Tell me what you did—that pistol!

TRAVERS. In self-defence—they would have killed *me* if they could.

KATE. You shot him?

TRAVERS. Yes. (*As she hides her face*) Kate! Kate! I can't come in front of the window—where can I go?

KATE. They will find you here. (*He turns, facing door with pistol, left hand holding door shut, menacingly*) No,—not that—you wouldn't shoot again! My father may come there!

TRAVERS. Kate! Do you believe me?

KATE. Yes.

TRAVERS. (*Pleading*) In self-defence—they were ten—ten to one.

KATE. You are bleeding!

TRAVERS. (*Covers hand*) The window cut me—give me a drink—I'm parching. (*She gets water in a dipper from bucket on bench. TRAVERS drinks with the tin rattling on his teeth. Noise of a galloping horse passes—He drops the dipper*) I don't think they saw me come in here.

KATE. Why did you come?

TRAVERS. Where else? I ran—turned every corner till I lost them. If I can hide or get a horse!

KATE. (*Doubting him*) Why did they try to arrest you?

TRAVERS. I—I don't know, Kate—some mistake.

KATE. They said the express robbery.

TRAVERS. It isn't so——

KATE. (*Goes to table and leans on it with her back to TRAVERS*) Ah!

TRAVERS. Kate (*Pause*) Kate (*Pause*) you must believe me! Why should I be here (*Pause*) in this little town——

KATE. Why did you shoot?

TRAVERS. I had to—they would have killed me—it is all a mistake—Kate, Kate——

KATE. What shall we do?

TRAVERS. If I had a horse——

KATE. But why?

TRAVERS. Listen!

(*There is again the sound of approaching hoofs.*)

KATE. Some one is coming—(*He turns at bay*) No—I couldn't stand it—go in here—(*Opens closet*) Quick!

TRAVERS. Yes! (*He enters the closet—she closes the door of the closet and throws open the street door; goes to table*)

(*JIM rides into view and drops from his horse.*)

JIM. (*In door*) Hello?

KATE. (*Behind table*) Well?

JIM. (*After looking slowly about*) Where is he?

KATE. I—I—where is who?

JIM. (*In a matter of course way*) Travers.

KATE. Why how should I know?

JIM. Then why don't you jes' say you don't know?

KATE. (*Behind chair L.*) Well, then I don't know.

JIM. (*Shaking his head*) Too late now.

KATE. Too late?

JIM. Yes—if it'd been all right, you wouldn't a tried to dodge me.

KATE. (*Near melodeon*) You may think as you choose.

JIM. (*Pause*) I'm awful sorry for you, Kate.

KATE. Oh, you needn't be.

JIM. (*On the "qui vive"*) But I want to see Mr. Travers.

KATE. (*In distress*) You—you annoy me very much. (*Sits left of table*)

JIM. (*In real tenderness*) Why, Kate—Katie—see here—I'm your friend—they ain't any body in the world feels as bad for you as I do—but be reasonable—it's only a question of time. I s'pose every man in Bowlin' Green that owns a gun or a bowie knife's collectin' up there at the Court House—your own pa and Dave—they'll be back here after a while—and what then?—don't you see?

KATE. It's horrible—don't tell me it is duty makes them hunt a fellow man like that. (*Rises*)

JIM. I don't pretend to know anything about that—(*Pause. Picks up dipper—looks at KATE*) Poor chap—thirsty—oh, well—that's your business, Kate. (*Puts dipper on the bench*)

KATE. (*At bay herself*) You're not a man,

Jim Radburn, you're a bloodhound—you *hunt* men.

JIM. Yes! (*Pause*)

KATE. Yes. (*End of rocker-chair*)

JIM. See here, Kate—I want a word or two with Mr. Travers. I think the honestest thing he ever done was liking you—I——

KATE. (*Fiercely*) And that is why you *hate* him! You think he likes *me*! You think if it hadn't been for *him* I might have liked *you*! Well, I do like him—(*Pause*) that's why you hunt him! It isn't your duty prompts you—it's your jealousy!

JIM. (*A pause in which he decides the question*) He's in that closet.

KATE. (*Turning*) He is not.

JIM. (*Straddling a chair and facing closet. Speaks in ordinary tone*) Travers, come out. If you don't come out, I'll shoot through the door.

TRAVERS. (*Bursting from closet and levelling pistol*) Throw up your hands!

JIM. (*Pause. In fateful monotone*) You're a damn fool! The sound of a gun now would fill both them streets with pitchforks.

KATE. Don't—don't—shoot.

JIM. Oh, he won't!

TRAVERS. Do you think you can arrest me—alive?

JIM. It don't make no difference to me.

KATE. (*Anxiously pleading*) If you are innocent, Mr. Travers—if you have acted in self-defence——

JIM. Wait, Kate—we ain't got time to *try* him now. *He ain't got time*; the boys are waiting up at the Court House—Mr. Travers, this young lady likes you—very much. (*He slowly rises*)

TRAVERS. (*Still covering him*) I know the cause of your hatred, Mr. Radburn—I know you are here because I love her.

JIM. No, I'm here because *she* likes you—if *she* didn't like you 'twouldn't make any difference

to me how quick we came to terms; but she likes you—your Pinkerton friend—(*Pause. Indicating neck*) dead—the boys are up at the Court House. Clark is pretty hot about them Jumbo bottles, and they wouldn't be reasonable—my hoss is standing at the door—with anything like a fair start he can hold his own—Louisiana town is eleven miles away and jist across from that is Illinois—and then you'll have to look out for yourself—now go!

KATE. (*With emotional appreciation*) Jim!

JIM. (*With a restraining gesture*) Never mind, Kate.

TRAVERS. You tell me to go?

JIM. (*Pause*) Yes.

TRAVERS. Why, there's ten thousand dollars' reward—

JIM. For the man that—went—in—that—car—but you ain't that man.

TRAVERS. On your horse?

JIM. Yes.

TRAVERS. Kate—(*Starts toward her*)

KATE. (*Shrinking*) Oh—h!

TRAVERS. (*Holds out hand*) Jim Radburn!

JIM. No—I give you my horse, but I'm *damned* if I shake hands with you—!!

(*Exit TRAVERS—KATE sinks in chair sobbing—*
JIM in doorway regards her tenderly)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE:—*Exterior of JIM RADBURN'S cabin-front, stoop and steps showing L. Rail-fence partly broken down is across the stage at right and continues in painting on the panorama back drop of rough country with stacks of cord wood. Many stumps showing. A mud road winds into the distance, a stile crosses fence at 3 R.*

DISCOVERED:—JIM *on step with pencil and queer note-paper, writing on a piece of broken board.*

JIM. Hello! *Dropped my pencil. (Picks it up)* Of course fell on the "battered side" an' I've got to whittle it agin. *(Takes enormous knife from his pocket and opens it)*

(Enter EM'LY, with milk-pails filled, from L. U.)

EM'LY. Say, Jim—

JIM. *(Whets knife on boot)* Well?

EM'LY. You let the pony out?

JIM. *(Sharpening pencil)* No.

EM'LY. Ain't in his stall.

JIM. I know. *(EM'LY looks at JIM a moment and exit back of house. Looking at paper)* I reckon that's right—Mayor and City Council—*(Writes—first wetting pencil in his mouth)* Huh—I s'pose I ought to write it in ink—dog gone it—*(Writing through his speech)* If it wasn't for Em'ly I wouldn't care—not a damn—*(Looks up)* I wonder whether it's U. G. or E. G. *(Writes)* I'll jus' kinder round off the top an' play it both ways. "Resignation," and after that, why they kin see me personally.

(*Re-enter EM'LY, with pails empty. EM'LY sings*)

EM'LY. (*Pause*) Who did let him out?

JIM. Who?

EM'LY. Pony.

JIM. Me.

EM'LY. Why, I thought you said you didn't.

JIM. Well, not to pasture; I give him to a feller.

EM'LY. (*Surprised*) Give him?

JIM. Yes.

EM'LY. Why?

JIM. (*With meaning*) He needed him awful bad. (*Writes*)

(*EM'LY stands looking at him a moment; then turns to go.*)

EM'LY. Say! (*Puts pails down*)

JIM. What?

EM'LY. Here comes Sam.

JIM. (*Writing and not looking up*) Bully

EM'LY. You want him?

JIM. No, but I reckon you will.

EM'LY. (*Smiling*) Git out.

JIM. (*Writing*) "P. S. This goes into effect from last night and is a copy—Joe Vernon has the original document."

EM'LY. (*On the stile. Looking off*) Heilo!

SAM. (*Off R.*) Hello!

(*Enter SAM.*)

EM'LY. Awful glad.

SAM. Hello, Jim.

JIM. Hello, Sam.

SAM. Know where your pony is?

JIM. Gone East.

SAM. He's in Louisiana.

JIM. Who's got him?

SAM. Why, ain't you heard?

JIM. Ain't heard nothing this morning.

EM'LY. What?

SAM. (*To JIM*) Travers stole him. (*To*

EM'LY) Stole Jim's pony after shootin' the Pinkerton.

EM'LY. Why Jim—

JIM. Never mind, Em'ly. (*To SAM*) Who told you?

SAM. The fellers. You know Travers was—er—

EM'LY. The train robber—yes, you told us last night that—

SAM. Yes, but I mean you know he was—killed?

JIM. (*Rising. With some interest*) Killed? When?

SAM. Last night—didn't you know?

JIM. No.

SAM. (*Puzzled*) Why, I thought you did—why, the fellers said—why, dog gone it they were blamed funny about it—they said, “oh I reckon Jim knows”—then stuck their tongues this way in their jaw—I thought maybe—(*Pantomimes pulling trigger*)

JIM. No, hadn't even heard of it.

SAM. Going to run an extra this morning—over a dozen goin' down just to see. Thought maybe Em'ly 'd like to go 'long and take a look at the remains.

EM'LY. (*Eagerly*) Jim!

JIM. You're going, are you, Sam?

SAM. Why, calculated to.

JIM. Well, I wish you'd stay home this mornin' and kind a look after Em'ly.

SAM. Certainly.

JIM. I'm goin' to be pretty busy, I think, eh?

SAM. (*Willing to stay*) Sure.

(Exit JIM into house.)

EM'LY. Something's worrying Jim. (*Crosses to porch*)

SAM. I guess this fellow's getting away last night.

EM'LY. No, something else. The operator waked me up after twelve o'clock with a telegram—an' Jim answered it and then got up and dressed himself and took both his guns and sat out on the porch here—Oh, for an hour.

SAM. Telegrams, eh?

EM'LY. Yes.

SAM. Well, I guess some other robbery or something. (*Up R.*) A sheriff has so much of that.

EM'LY. I know. But Jim's worried.

SAM. Well, I couldn't sleep myself last night.

EM'LY. Me neither. After you left here, and a telling me about it, it seemed I could see Travers shooting the man's neck every time I closed my eyes.

SAM. He's a good deal better this morning.

EM'LY. Who?

SAM. The Pinkerton that was shot.

EM'LY. The Pinkerton?

SAM. Yes.

EM'LY. I thought he was dead.

SAM. Oh, that's what Clark said—but the other doctor turned him over and got him breathing again.

EM'LY. I'm so glad—poor fellow—and Jim kicked him so yesterday—clean across that stile.

SAM. When he come here?

EM'LY. Yes, with that letter.

SAM. Speakin' of letters, I got one myself this morning.

EM'LY. (*Gets letter from pocket*) Who from?

SAM. Looks like a girl wrote it.

EM'LY. What!

SAM. It's in typewritin' an' so I guess a girl did write it—but it's from the company.

EM'LY. More mean things?

SAM. Nicer than pie. See *here*. (*Reads:*) "*And regretting deeply our error, we of course cannot deal with any lawyer but would be pleased with a personal call from you—your salary awaits you for the time you have been absent—*"

EM'LY. (*Indignantly*) Been absent!

SAM. And they having me locked up in a hotel.

EM'LY. I should say so.

SAM. (*Reading:*)—"been absent. And we can guarantee your regular employment in our offices here or at any other station you may prefer. Yours very truly, etc.,—Superintendent."

EM'LY. Well, what do you think?

SAM. Not much—Bollinger says we can get twenty thousand dollars.

EM'LY. I know—that's what he told Jim too—he wanted us to put off the wedding.

SAM. Jim?

EM'LY. No—Bollinger—

SAM. Why?

EM'LY. He said it would make a stronger case.

SAM. (*Resenting the idea*) Well, see here, Em'ly—

EM'LY. I'm only telling you what Bollinger said.

SAM. Put off our wedding?

EM'LY. He said for about two months.

SAM. What's he take me for?

EM'LY. Jim heard him.

SAM. What did Jim say?

EM'LY. He said—why he said that was about ten thousand a month, just for waiting.

SAM. No, sir-ee.

EM'LY. An' Bollinger, tryin' to encourage me said he'd let his wife go that long for half the money.

SAM. Well, do you think it's right?

EM'LY. What?

SAM. Why, this postponing for damages.

EM'LY. Not if you don't—only Bollinger said it wouldn't hurt any to wait.

SAM. See here, Em'ly—seems to me you ain't any too anxious you'self.

EM'LY. Well, how can a girl be, Sam—I can't just up and say I won't wait—especially when they're your damages—I haven't got any right to say I'm worth ten thousand dollars a month.

SAM. (*Embracing her*) Well, you bet your life you are.

EM'LY. (*Acquiescing*) Well—

(*Enter DAVE and LIZBETH.*)

DAVE. Hello, Sam.

SAM. Hello.

LIZBETH. (*Pleased with the example of SAM and EM'LY*) Dave!

EM'LY. Why, how do you do?

DAVE. Where's Jim?

SAM. In the house.

LIZBETH. Isn't it awful, Em'ly? (*She and EM'LY go to the little porch*)

SAM. What's the matter?

DAVE. People don't understand it.

SAM. What do you mean?

DAVE. Why, Jim; lots of 'em thinks he did it.

SAM. Did what? Shoot Travers?

DAVE. No, give him that horse—

SAM. Give to him? Git out.

DAVE. Well, you bet they said so, and Bollinger and Sarber and Cal and lots of them think so.

SAM. (*Astonished*) Git out!

DAVE. Yes, sir—ee.

SAM. They better not say that to me.

DAVE. Why, they'd say it to Jim—you ought to hear them talking at the convention——

SAM. Is this the day of the convention?

DAVE. 'Tain't come to order yit but they're all up to the Court House,—one feller nailed the telegrams on a bulletin where everybody could read them.

SAM. What telegrams?

DAVE. Why, Jim's.

(Enter JIM from house.)

JIM. Mornin', Lizbeth.

LIZBETH. How de do, Jim.

JIM. Kate feelin' all right?

LIZBETH. Well, you know——

JIM. Oh, yes—natural enough—ain't you workin', Dave?

DAVE. Convention.

JIM. Sure. Forgot the convention.

DAVE. Me and Lizbeth come together because we thought Sam and Em'ly'd stand up with us.

JIM. At the Squire's?

DAVE. No, preacher's.

JIM. I reckon.

(Looks at EM'LY.)

EM'LY. Of course.

JIM. Convention ain't met?

DAVE. Not yit.

JIM. I think I'll go down to the Court House.
(Starts down and stops as he reaches the stile)
Hello!

SAM. What's up?

JIM. Nothing'—some o' the boys—comin' here,
I expect—Say!

SAM. What?

JIM. I mean Dave. (R. C.)

DAVE. How's that?

JIM. Will you do me a favor?

DAVE. Certainly.

JIM. (*Pointing off R.*) This letter—give it to the Mayor, or any of the Council—some of them's sure to be at the convention.

DAVE. All right. (*He goes onto the stile and stops*) Bollinger's one, ain't he?

JIM. Yes.

DAVE. He's comin' with them fellers—

JIM. Well, give it to *him*—a little before he gits here.

DAVE. All right, Jim. (*Starts off—stops*) No trouble, you don't reckon?

JIM. No, I reckon not.

(*Exit DAVE.*)

EM'LY. Jim!

JIM. I want you and Lizbeth to go in the house. Go on!

EM'LY. (*Going*) What's the matter?

JIM. You go with them, Sam—and take care of 'em.

SAM. (*Joining the girls on the porch*) Why, Jim, if there's goin' to be any trouble—

JIM. (*Watching the coming mob*) I reckon they ain't—and anyway I want this side of the fence by myself. (*Exeunt LIZBETH and EM'LY to house*) Take 'em way back to the kitchen.

SAM. (*At the door*) All right?

JIM. Dead sure.

(*Exit SAM.* JIM removes his paper collar—adjusts the two guns under his coat-tails—takes a chew of tobacco and fatefully waits. Enter back of fence R., BOLLINGER, SARBER, CAL, ESROM, DAVE, and Supers; DAVE drifts away from them to L. ESROM playing Jew's-harp;

all enter when JIM gets through his preparations and leans against porch.)

BOLLINGER. (*Loudly*) Here, stop the band.
SARBER. Stop her.

(*ESROM is silent*)

BOLLINGER. (*Pause*) Hello, Jim. (*His tone carries a nagging insinuation*)

JIM. Hello.

DAVE. I'll tell the old man, Jim. (*Going*)

JIM. Oh, no hurry, Dave.

(*Exit Dave.*)

BOLLINGER. Well, they killed our friend down at Louisiana last night. (*JIM chews and nods once*) Where's your pony?

JIM. (*After pause*) Have you looked in the stable?

BOLLINGER. (*Sneering*) No.

JIM. Well, don't.

BOLLINGER. Didn't calculate to, Jim. (*Pause*) You know what that fellow said before they shot him.

JIM. (*Shakes his head*) No.

SARBER. (*In quarrelsome bawl. Pointing at JIM*) Why, he said—

BOLLINGER. (*Maintaining his leadership*) Hold on! it was understood I was to do the talkin'.

ALL. Go on! Shut up, Sarber!

SARBER. He was takin' all day fur it.

BOLLINGER. (*Clashing*) I'll take as long as I damn please, and I'll have the nigger play tunes between times if I want to—

ALL. Go on, Bollinger!

BOLLINGER. (*Resuming his nag of JIM*) Know what he said?

JIM. (*Pause. Chews and shakes head*) Don't care.

BOLLINGER. He said you *give* him the pony.

JIM. You *hear* him say so?

BOLLINGER. No, but the boys down Louisiana did; they knowed it was your pony, and they arrested him.

SARBER. (*Again intruding*) Then they telegraphed you—

BOLLINGER. Hold on! (*Growl from mob*) They didn't know he was the train robber—only thought he was a hoss thief—so they held him while they telegraphed you—(JIM *nods—pause*) That's the way we got on to him—the operator showed us the message—(*Pause. JIM nods*) Showed us your answer too. (*Pause. JIM nods*) Here's a copy of it marked Exhibit B. "The man tells the truth. The pony is his'n—Jim Radburn."

SARBER. And we saw the original.

(JIM *nods.*)

BOLLINGER. (*His anger now lifting his tone into police court tirade*) While we were waiting up at the Court House where you told us to go—and I didn't have a darn thing but a butcher knife—you were a standin' in with this feller and a givin' him your hoss to git away on.

SARBER. (*In same manner*) And darn good reason—Sam Fowler stood in with him, an' he's a goin' to marry your sister—in the house now—I kin see him at the kitchen window. (*All growl, and half start over the stile toward kitchen*)

JIM. (*With sudden vehemence*) Hold on! (*Impressive pause; and quiet by crowd*) You better talk it over with me first.

BOLLINGER. Well, you give him the pony, didn't you? (JIM *is silent*) Didn't you?

JIM. What's that to you?

BOLLINGER. (*Half laughing*) Well—what is it to us——

(*All laugh derisively.*)

ESROM. (*Emboldened to participate*) I knew 'twasn't no clinker in de coke, 'cause he frowed de mud in it and——

BOLLINGER. Shoot that nigger.

SARBER. Shut up! (*Smashes Nigger in the mouth*)

BOLLINGER. (*To JIM*) Well, say—(*Pause*) That was a fine way for a sheriff to do,—wasn't it?

JIM. I've resigned.

BOLLINGER. I got your letter. You hadn't resigned last night; you know there's a law for you, Mr. Radburn.

JIM. That's all right.

BOLLINGER. *You'll* have to "do time."

JIM. (*Smiling*) When?

BOLLINGER. This session—you git a taste of the jug this morning.

JIM. Not this morning?

BOLLINGER. Well, we'll see—you go with us

(*Murmur and start.*)

JIM. (*Again in sudden warning*) Hold on, boys—(*Pause and recovery of calm*) I claim everything this side of the fence. Now I know it ain't sociable but I don't want you to come in. Whenever the District Attorney gits his witnesses together, I'll be there, but I won't go this mornin'—(*Pause*) and *any how* I won't go with such a mangy lot of heelers as you've scraped up this trip.

BOLLINGER. I reckon you will, Jim.

(*Murmur and movement.*)

JIM. Hold on—(*Pause, with both hands on guns*) I don't want to break my record, but I'll have to do it if you trespass on the lawn.

BOLLINGER. (*Discreetly on stile. After a pause*) I hope you don't think we're scared, Jim?

JIM. No—ain't anything to be scared about, Tom—as long as you stay outside—Keep off the grass.

BOLLINGER. (*His irritation returning. Threateningly*) And don't you dare to draw a gun on any of us. Say, Sarber—go down to the Court House and git a warrant. If you had a warrant we could walk right in.

MRS. VERNON. (*Off r.*) Now, Kate, be careful.

(*Enter KATE and MRS. VERNON over the stile—the mob parting to admit them.*)

KATE. What is the matter? Jim!

JIM. Won't you come in? Howdy, Mrs. Vernon?

(*KATE and MRS. VERNON come on.*)

KATE. (*Anxiously. To JIM*) What do these men want? (*To BOLLINGER*) What is the trouble here?

BOLLINGER. (*Pointing at JIM*) Malfeasance.

KATE. What?

BOLLINGER. Why, Miss Kate, he gave his horse to a man he ought to have arrested—a train robber—a murderer—and—

JIM. Hold on, Bollinger—man's dead, and he used to be a friend to these ladies.

KATE. (*Crosses to the men*) No—do not speak of him—we thought he was a friend—but why do you accuse Mr. Radburn?

JIM. No use talkin', Kate, they know.

BOLLINGER. You bet.

JIM. Lizbeth's inside—you an' Kate better go in, Mrs. Vernon.

KATE. No. Do you blame this man?

BOLLINGER. Blame him! Why he's an accessory after the fact and maybe before—I don't see how he can git out of it! Here's his telegram, really better than a plea of guilty—we ought to arrest him!

KATE. (*To BOLLINGER*) He is not guilty. (*To JIM*) Oh, Jim, Jim! Can you forgive me? (*She extends her hand*)

JIM. (*Taking her hand*) Why, Kate, 'tain't none o' their business.

KATE. No, it is all mine. (*Murmur from crowd—to the men*) Listen; all of you must know that Mr. Travers was attentive to me—I believed he was a gentleman,—we thought he was a friend—(*Half crying*) but he never was half the friend—never *could* be half the friend that Jim Radburn's been—

JIM. (*Expostulating*) Kate!

KATE. (*To JIM*) Yes, I know all about it now—my father has told me all—everything about my college days—I am humiliated to the dust.

JIM. Now, Kate—

KATE. You should have told me in the shop, when I presumed to speak of your disadvantages.

JIM. (*To men*) See here—this is a little matter between me and Kate Vernon—none of your business—so why don't you saunter off? (*Men start to go R.*)

KATE. (*To the men*) No, I want them to stay. I have nothing to say of Mr. Travers' doings—we were mistaken—but Jim Radburn thought I cared for the man and he was big enough to let him escape for *me*—I am the one at fault—he has almost given up his life to me. You, Col. Bollinger, and every one knows that he could win his nomination if he wanted to—(*Turning to JIM*)—But he gave that up too, because Joe Vernon, my father, wants it. Oh, Jim! Jim! (*Sinks on steps, sobbing*)

MRS. VERNON. (*Cosses L. to her*) There, Kate,

I knowed it would be too much fur you. (*To JIM*)
She's took on this way since daylight.

JIM. Say, you fellers ain't got spunk enough
to keep hoss flies off a you. What do you want?
Cold victuals?

BOLLINGER. Come on, fellers—(*The men start
off*) hold on, here's Joe. (*Men return*)

MRS. VERNON. Joe Vernon!

(*Enter JOE and DAVE*)

JOE. What's the matter, Jim? ain't nobody hurt?
Why, Kate——

JIM. You made a pretty mess of it, aint' you?

JOE. What?

JIM. (*Pointing to KATE*) Tellin' everything.

JOE. Well, that ain't all of it.

JIM. What ain't?

JOE. Why, they put them blamed telegrams up
at the convention—I didn't see them till the fust
ballot was over and they'd nominated *me*——

MRS. VERNON. For Jefferson, Joe?

JOE. (*In great excitement*) Yes, for the Legis-
lature.

(*Cheers from crowd.*)

JIM. There, Kate, do you hear that? Now *what's*
the use cryin'?

JOE. And I made a speech——

MRS. VERNON. Git out.

JOE. Git out yourself——

MRS. VERNON. Say, your pa's been nominated
and made a speech!

JOE. Well, lemme tell you——

JIM. Well, never mind the speech, Joe—you're
as good as elected anyhow.

JOE. And you done every bit of it—why I took
them blamed telegrams and I told that convention

every thing I knew. Everything Kate told me—about your getting off the track 'cause you liked her. Tom, you told me yourself that Jim wasn't makin' no canvass fur the nomination. Do you know why? Cause he liked my Kate—Last night he gimme his resignation as sheriff—Do you know why?

BOLLINGER. Afore he give him the hoss?

JOE. Long before—and Jim Radburn, I believe you knowed then who that feller was and I told the convention so. He did give Travers the hoss, and then I said "he give up his pony to this feller 'cause he didn't have the heart to make Kate feel bad"—and I said—"what's Missouri—what's Pike County comin' to if we kin persecute a man like that," and by golly, they jus' stood on their hind legs and hollered fur you!

BOLLINGER. I'm a comin' inside myself if he pulls both guns. (*Comes over the stile*)

JIM. Why, Tom.

(*They shake hands.*)

JOE. An' they're up there now like a pack of howlin' idiots unanimously re-electing you sheriff by acclamation, and "Vivy Vochy", over and over agin.

JIM. There, there, Kate—you're goin' to Jefferson soon—an' you kin forgit all about it.

KATE. I don't want to go to Jefferson, Jim—I don't want to—forget it. (*Turns, weeps on JOE's breast*)

MRS. VERNON. Now, talk to her, Jim!

JIM. Not now—she feels too bad.

MRS. VERNON. But she'll get over that—she's comin' to her senses, an' *she knows she likes you*—Talk to her.

JIM. Some other time.

CURTAIN.

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